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TWO DISCOURSES

ON THE

UNION BETWEEN GOD AND CHRIST,

AND THE GROUNDS OF

UNITARIAN NONCONFORMITY

TO THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

WITH

A PREFATORY ADDRESS TO UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS.

By THOMAS MADGE,

MINISTER OF ESSEX-STREET CHAPEL.

"Would to God that Christians would be content with the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel, and be persuaded to make no other terms of communion than what Jesus himself hath made!"—DR. SYKES.

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PREFATORY ADDRESS

TO

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS.

THESE two Discourses, in vindication of the principles generally entertained by us, are published in compliance with wishes to that effect repeatedly expressed. In what I have said of the grounds of our separation from the Established Church, I have aimed to distinguish *our* reasons for Dissent, from those which are commonly advanced by most other classes of seceders. Indeed, with the opinions and conduct of many of them, our principles and practice are still more at variance than with those of the Church of England. For, though with some of the creeds and articles and various portions of the liturgy of that Church we entirely disagree, yet practically there is often displayed by its members a spirit of libe-

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rality, of kindness, and of charity, which is very rarely to be met with in those with whom, except a general belief in Christianity, we have scarcely anything in common save the name of Dissenters. Those of our arguments which may be thought to tell most against the Established Church, according to its present constitution, apply with still more effect to the narrow and exclusive principles too frequently set up by the Churches among the Nonconformists. Professing to rely solely on Scripture, and to maintain and uphold the right of every individual to interpret that Scripture for himself,—affecting to reject the bondage of subscription to articles of faith, and to allow full and perfect freedom of conscience,—they yet impose tests and terms of membership founded upon mere human authority, and exclude from their communion all those whose opinions happen not to symbolize with their own. They demand that the endowments of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge should be laid open to them, while, without scruple, they not only shut up their own foundations within the circumscribed boundaries of their own sect, but are strenuously labouring to deprive others of the funds which they have in-

herited from their forefathers, on the ground that, in acting upon the true Protestant principle of thinking and judging for themselves, they have come to conclusions opposed, in many respects, to the opinions generally received*. Differing, then, as we do from the English Church, there are large classes of English Dissenters from whom we differ still more; and concerning whom their late intolerant conduct naturally prompts the exclamation, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

The views which are frequently taken of the opinions which we entertain are so erroneous, and

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* I allude here to the case of Lady Hewley's Charity, lately brought before the Court of Chancery, from which it will be seen that the Orthodox Dissenters, as they style themselves,—instead of being satisfied with largely partaking of the funds which the Presbyterian trustees of a Presbyterian benefaction have distributed in a spirit of generous comprehension, in agreement with what they conceive to have been the intentions of the testatrix,—are now seeking by process of law, by the aid of obsolete and intolerant statutes, to deprive the body for whom it was at first chiefly designed of all benefit therein, and to monopolize the whole to themselves. He who is desirous of understanding the real merits of this question, would do well to read carefully the admirable and instructive pamphlet of the Rev. Joseph Hunter, entitled "An Historical Defence of the Trustees of Lady Hewley's Foundations, and of the Claims upon them of the Presbyterian Ministry of England."

the imputations with which we are perpetually assailed are so palpably unjust, that it requires, on the part of those who are well acquainted with their principles, a great stretch of charity to believe that such charges are made in sober and serious earnestness. Be the source, however, in which they originate what it may, one thing is certain, that they are widely circulated, and—among the uninquiring, unreasoning multitude, a body gathered from all ranks and conditions of life,—obtain a ready and general belief. In this way mischief is done to our cause which we have it not in our power adequately to repair. The false statement goes where the true statement is not permitted to enter. The calumny spreads faster and wider than the refutation follows. The poison is swallowed where the antidote can never be administered. If all who are called upon to decide upon the correctness of our sentiments would take the proper means of judging before they decide, we should have no fears for the result. We have no reluctance in submitting our cause to a trial, and no doubt as to what the issue of the trial would be. Our anxiety, our apprehension, arises from the difficulty of procuring a

fair and *candid* trial, of having the evidence properly stated, duly weighed, and impartially considered. Our complaint is, not that our opinions are attacked, not that their truth and consistency with Scripture are called in question, (for at this we have no more right to be offended, than have others when their sentiments are impugned,) but the subject of our complaint is, that we are constantly charged with holding opinions which we do *not* hold, and with cherishing designs which are alien to our hearts. Let the faith which we profess be justly represented, let it be contemplated in its genuine form and features, and we have sufficient confidence in the greatness of its merits and the power of its charms to believe that it will attract the admiration and win the affections of the thoughtful, candid, and inquiring mind.

We think that we can honestly say that we desire to witness the triumph of truth on which side soever the truth may lie. Let our opinions be proved to be false, let it be shown that they are inconsistent with that testimony to which all Christians alike appeal, and what is there to prevent us from instantly renouncing our attachment to them?

What have we to gain by holding fast to them, unless they themselves are fastened to the rock of eternal truth? If from that connexion and alliance they are separated and dissociated, the chord which bound them to us is broken asunder. It is only as long as they appear in union and association with the word of God,—with the doctrines of Christ,—that our hearts are knit to them in holy constancy and love. Wedded to them, indeed, our thoughts and affections are, but only in as much and so far as they are wedded to the just, the true, the beautiful, and the good. Divide, —cut them off from these, and you destroy the very chain by whose links the bond of our sympathy with them is preserved. Those who suppose us to be actuated by sinister motives, to be so much in love with a particular creed as to adopt and abide by it in spite of any incongruity and deformity which may be proved to belong to it, should consider with themselves what, in a worldly sense, we have to gain by our belief. Is it the road to honour and preferment? Does it carry with it any peculiar recommendation to popular favour? Does it guide its professors to the acquirement of any of those advantages and pos-

sessions which act upon the mind with a seductive influence, with a bewitching power of deception? Assuredly, nothing of the kind can be pretended. We are not of the world, and there is good evidence that, with many, this is no secret. The world's love and the world's law are against us, and are known to be against us. From that quarter no influence arises but such as is used to the prejudice and disparagement of our faith,—in diverting our thoughts and drawing our inclinations away from it. And we know, likewise, that the influence thus exerted is often but too successfully exerted, not only in bewildering the judgement, and misleading the understanding, but in bribing the conscience and betraying the mind to the outward profession and avowal of what it inwardly disowns and rejects. Looking, then, to the world,—all its meaner considerations operate to the hinderance and not to the furtherance of our opinions. As far as *they* are concerned, its power is a repellent power, not attracting our minds towards *them*, but evermore tending to keep them and our minds asunder.

Without insinuating, therefore, that they, who are opposed to us, are *directly* and *consciously* in-

fluenced by worldly considerations, it is no more than the plain simple truth to say, that on their side, and not on ours, such inducements are most plentifully to be met with. Whether they have any effect in perverting or corrupting the judgement, whether they do or do not give an improper bias to the mind in its leanings towards the popular system, it is for the friends and advocates of that system to determine. Far be it from us to say that they *do*,—to say so, at least, of any individual believer. But this we say, that to many they *must* present strong temptations to deal unfairly with the subject, and that the presumption is, that, oftentimes, such temptations insinuate themselves into the mind of the inquirer, leading his thoughts and sentiments, unconsciously, to the conclusion at which it is his interest to arrive. This, however, is a topic on which I am not desirous of dwelling. I had much rather give every one the credit of a sincere and earnest desire and endeavour to attain to the knowledge of the truth. I will not suppose the intervention of any unrighteous motives, by which his mind should be dishonestly acted upon. We are, all of us, weak and fallible creatures; liable to have our judgements, in vari-

ous ways, warped; and our views, through the medium of passion and prejudice, distorted and discoloured. Of this let all parties be mindful, and against this let all of them be upon their guard. Instead of one saying to another, *you* are actuated by interest, and *you* by a love of popularity, and *you* by pride of understanding, and *you* by a passion for novelty, let each be regarded by each as a fellow-pilgrim to the land of eternity, as much concerned as his brother to understand what God has been pleased to reveal of himself, and of the final destiny of his rational offspring. What man has not as much interest in the knowledge of the truth as any other man? Who, that receives Christ as his Master, can wish to be otherwise than truly informed of what that Master has taught and commanded?

I know not that it can be justly laid to our charge that we have, in any great degree, been guilty of violating the law of charity and love. I am not aware that our practice has been to deal in insinuations injurious to the personal honour and character of those from whose opinions we have seen reason to dissent. That we have always steered clear of every offensive expression,—

that we have never been betrayed into the use of supercilious language,—of language inconsistent with the spirit of Christian humility,—is more than I would take upon myself to affirm. But, usually I think, it has been our endeavour to avoid, as much as possible, all cause of personal offence; to cast no imputation upon the motives of those to whose theological system we have most strongly objected; to look fairly at the statements of our opponents; and to be careful, in controverting them, to understand them in the sense in which they were meant to be understood.

There can also, I conceive, be no inducement with any one to embrace Unitarian opinions from the idea that they relax the strictness of moral obligation, impose easier terms of obedience, or give greater licence to the indulgence of sinful passions and inclinations. I know that this is often insinuated, nay more, that it is sometimes plainly and broadly asserted. We are said to make light of the evil of sin, and not to be very rigid in enforcing the unbending and unalterable nature of God's holy law. What the actual practice of Unitarians may be; what the general tenour of their conduct is; how they rank in the scale of

morals as compared with other classes of Christians, opens a very delicate and invidious topic of discussion, upon which no provocation will, I trust, induce me to enter. But that the system which they profess sanctions any departure from the code of the purest morality; that it allows of any laxness in the observance of the divine commands; that it looks with an eye of indifference and unconcern upon any kind of sinful indulgence or vicious pursuit, is palpably and notoriously untrue. It teaches, as strongly and as plainly as it is possible for any system to do, that all sin is odious in the sight of God, and *should* be so in the sight of man. It enforces the necessity of a holy and virtuous life as the "one thing needful," as the indispensable condition of true happiness, as the only available instrument of rendering ourselves fit objects of the divine mercy and forgiveness. It tells us that our actions are open to the inspection of that Being who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with approbation, and who will bring every work into judgement, with every secret thought. It holds forth and inculcates, in the most peremptory and uncompromising manner, the assurance that "every man must give account of himself to

God, and be judged according to his works." So far from providing any substitute for defective virtue, it declares plainly and emphatically, that he only "who *doeth* righteousness *is* righteous," and that we must all "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." In the importance which it ascribes to the cultivation and possession of genuine morality; in the estimation and regard in which it holds the practice of virtue; in the earnestness with which it insists upon the connexion between sin and suffering, between duty and happiness, between obedience to the commands of God and the blessings to be reaped in heaven, it is impossible for any doctrine to go beyond it. This is admitted by many of the most respectable and candid writers among Trinitarians themselves. Bishop Burnet, speaking of the Unitarians of his day, says, "I must do them the right to own that their rules in morality are exact and severe; that they are, generally, men of probity, justice and charity, and seem to be very much in earnest in pressing the obligation to very high degrees of virtue*." And in a work

* Address to the Clergy of the Diocese of Sarum, prefixed to his Four Discourses.

published a few years ago by Dr. Adam, a clergyman of the Church of England, the following candid acknowledgement is generously made. "With regard," says he, "to their moral code, the principles of the Unitarians do not seem to admit their loosening, in the least, the bonds of duty. On the contrary, they appear to be actuated by an earnest desire to promote practical religion. Love is, with them, the fulfilling of the law; and the habitual practice of virtue, from a principle of love to God and benevolence to man, is, in their judgement, the sum and substance of Christianity*."

To what extent Unitarians act up to the rules of morality prescribed by their faith, and whether they are more deficient than others in the performance of the duties imposed upon them by their principles, is an inquiry which each individual would do well to institute for himself; but, to go beyond this, and sit in judgement on the conduct and character of others, can serve no other purpose than that of ministering to the growth of spiritual pride, and the encouragement

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* Adam's Religious World Displayed, vol. ii. p. 171. 1st edit.

of malignant bigotry. That we, all of us, fall far short of what we ought to be; that we, none of us, act fully up to the standard by which our conduct should be regulated; that we suffer our principles to lie too much in our heads without bringing them into the sanctuary of our hearts and making them the prompters and sustainers of holy and benevolent thoughts and purposes; that we all need to be frequently reminded of what, holding the sentiments we do, it becomes us to be; is a concession which, in common with all denominations of Christians, we cannot refuse to make. And we *would* make it with humility and sorrow. We are well aware that we have much on this score that calls for penitence, correction, and amendment. Would that our faults and errors arrested more of our own attention, and excited more our own exertions to remove them! But if any Unitarian supposes that, by reason of his peculiar opinions, he is released from any one moral obligation which Christianity can be clearly shown to have inculcated, or that a wider door is thereby opened to him for indulgence in sinful pleasure, let him be assured that he has altogether mistaken the character of the faith

which he has embraced, that he is little acquainted with its true spirit, and has little entered into its purpose and design.

In connexion with this topic I may, perhaps, be allowed to remark, that those Unitarians who have best understood their principles, who have most thought upon and valued them, whose souls have been brought into the closest and most abiding intimacy with them, and upon whose minds, therefore, they have probably exerted their natural and appropriate influence, have ever been distinguished for the excellence and purity of their lives. A host of names rises to my view, to each of which I might refer in corroboration of the justness of this remark. From the bold and intrepid preaching of Biddle, to the powerful and awakening appeals sent forth by the illustrious Priestley, a race of advocates and defenders of the doctrine of the Divine Unity successively sprang up, not more distinguished for their learning and talents than for their piety and virtue. Oppressed and persecuted as many of them were, yet to this their memories may justly lay claim, that not even calumny itself has dared to breathe the whisper of an accusation against their spotless

and incorruptible integrity. Passing by a long list of worthies whose names are honoured in our Churches, it is impossible to revert for a moment to the consideration of such a life as that of our revered Priestley, without perceiving what a mighty influence was exerted upon his thoughts and actions by the religious principles which he professed,—without feeling that they penetrated the very depths of his soul, and imparted sustenance, strength, and vigour to the noblest affections of his heart. If we wanted an illustration of the natural tendency of Unitarian opinions, we might turn to the contemplation of him whose whole mind and soul were given to their advocacy and defence. Subject as he was to trials of no common severity, and driven by the rancorous malice of his enemies, from scenes of usefulness and comfort in his native land, to find a home and an asylum in a foreign country,—he never, under any circumstances, forgot the spirit and the temper becoming his Christian profession, nor was ever betrayed into the expression of feelings at variance with the faith, the charity, and the hopes of the Gospel. He was, in deed and in truth, a real, sincere, practical believer, showing his faith by his

works; living in the world, but, at the same time, above it; acting as seeing Him who is invisible; and looking not so much at "the things which are seen and temporal, as at those which are unseen and eternal." Of this great and good man I am tempted to quote what has been so justly and beautifully said of him by two excellent judges, now, like himself, departed to the world of spirits, or awaiting in their graves the summons of that voice which shall speedily call them to its bright and august abodes.

The words which I shall first cite are those of the late Reverend Dr. Parr, a distinguished clergyman of the Established Church, and celebrated, equally, for the depth of his learning and the liberality of his spirit.

"Let Dr. Priestley," he observes, "be confuted where he is mistaken. Let him be exposed where he is superficial. Let him be repressed where he is dogmatical. Let him be rebuked where he is censorious. But let not his attainments be depreciated, because they are numerous almost without a parallel. Let not his talents be ridiculed, because they are superlatively great. Let not his morals be vilified, because they are correct

without austerity, and exemplary without ostentation; because they present even to common observers, the innocence of a hermit, and the simplicity of a patriarch; and because a philosophic eye will at once discover in them, the *deep-fixed root of virtuous principle, and the solid trunk of virtuous habit**."

Not inferior to this, either on account of the value of the authority whence it proceeded, or for the beauty of the language in which it is delivered, is the testimony borne to the same transcendent excellence by the late Reverend William Wood of Leeds, the immediate successor in the pastoral office of the Christian philosopher now in our contemplation, and himself a man whom to know was to honour and respect, and who has left behind him a name embalmed in the grateful and affectionate remembrance of his friends. The passage to which I refer forms the conclusion of the funeral discourse delivered by him on occasion of Dr. Priestley's death. It is as follows:

"He was a burning and a shining light, and

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* See a Letter from Irenopolis to the Inhabitants of Eleutheropolis, p. 18.

those who truly knew him rejoiced in his light. Like a fervent summer's sun, he rose at an early hour, to send forth his beams far and wide, and illustrate the wonders of his Creator's works; and though, when not far advanced beyond the height of noon, he was assailed by a sudden storm, which hid him from the eyes of men, and seemed for a time to have blotted him out from the firmament of heaven, he moved in a sphere far above its reach, and passed on with undiminished strength. His rays were intercepted, but not extinguished; his glory was obscured, but not lost. He soon dispelled the thickest blackness of the gloom, burst at length through the yielding cloud, and at the solemn hour of eve, appeared all calm and serene, with a less dazzling splendour, but apparently with a larger orb, giving to the admiring world a delightful earnest that he will rise again to a brighter morn, and shine with a new lustre through the ever-extending course of a constant day."

To words like these, glowing with the spirit of the purest eloquence, it would be presumption in me to add one further remark relating to the subject of them, save that it would be well for all of

us to pray that we may lead a life of integrity and piety kindred to that which he led, and that our last end may be like his,—calm, peaceful, and serene,—unclouded by guilty recollections of the past, and radiant with bright and blessed hopes of the future!

To the gay and the giddy, the careless and the sensual, Unitarianism has no attractions to offer. Recommendations it has none, but to the candid, serious, impartial inquirers after truth. To such persons it must be a cheering circumstance to know that some of the greatest and noblest spirits that ever walked the earth, that some of the loftiest intellects that ever mused upon truth, and some of the purest hearts that ever throbbed with piety to God, have belonged to the same "household of faith" with themselves. And as an indirect and collateral evidence of what the spirit was by which they were actuated, it should be noticed that those who have sought the truth in the love of it, who have employed their thoughts in Scriptural investigations, and have spoken frankly and openly to the world, have generally been branded with the name of Socinian,—that being deemed the foulest term of reproach that

could be cast upon them. What is this but an involuntary confession that between our system of faith, and the spirit of free, honest, and generous inquiry, there is an accordance, a harmony, which renders the one no unmeet companion for the other, which assimilates their characters, and identifies their interests.

Unjust and bitter as are the attacks continually made upon us, we fear them not. We are prepared to resist them,—prepared to go forth and encounter them, in the confidence that we are clothed with the armour of truth. The general principles of Christianity, those which concern the common faith and the common salvation, are the principles upon which we most delight to dwell. We are not eager to engage in everlasting contests about matters which, as subjects of controversy, conduce little towards general edification and comfort; but, at the same time, we will not shrink from the defence of any important truth which has been entrusted to our care and guardianship, nor decline the task, when forced upon us, of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. In the words of Milton, "If God come to try our constancy, we

ought not to shrink or stand the less firmly for that, but pass on with more steadfast resolution to establish the truth."

In meekness, then, let us endeavour to instruct those that oppose us, and show, by the consistency and integrity of our lives, our right and title to the Christian name. One interpretation only can be put on the high and noble bearing of a consistently virtuous and good man. It speaks a language which none can mistake, and with a voice of power which none can resist. Let the narrow-minded bigots beat the alarm. It will not terrify those who know in whom they trust, and where their security abides. Let us hold fast to the profession of our faith with an unwavering mind, steadily and strenuously opposing all spiritual pride and presumption, all attempts to intimidate reason and to fetter the freedom of the soul. Above all, be it our constant care and concern to adorn the doctrine we profess by the exhibition of a spirit, a temper, and a practice corresponding to its pure and heavenly nature.

TWO DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.

JOHN X. 30.

I and my Father are one.

THESE words are expressive of a certain unity or connexion between God and Christ; and have been variously understood according to the respective views entertained by the different interpreters of the nature and character of our Lord. Some have inferred from them and similar expressions, that the union existing between God and Christ is a union of natures,—that, in some mysterious way unknown to us, the Deity of the one and the humanity of the other are so essentially and substantially associated together as, by this union, to constitute one person. Others, as the Unitarian Christians, object to this interpretation, because, in the first place, it assumes as an hypothesis what the Scriptures nowhere teach; and in the next place, because the union spoken of in

the text, as is obvious from the context and many other places in the New Testament, is manifestly not a union of natures, but a union of will and affection, of disposition, purpose, and action.

Before proceeding with the consideration of the general question, allow me to devote a few words to the explanation of the phraseology of the text. Whatever may be the notions entertained of the person of Christ, it is agreed by all Christians, by all who acknowledge the divine authority of their Master, that he appeared on earth to make known to man the will, and to execute the purposes, of his heavenly Father. The wisdom which he uttered was uttered by the inspiration of God, and the works which he performed were performed by the power of God. According to his own averment, it was his meat and drink to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish the work which it was given him to do; and consequently, he was one with God in mind and purpose, in spirit and intention, in affection and action. This, as it seems to us, is the meaning of the text. Jesus Christ does not assert that he is the Father, or the same being or person with the Father, but that he and the Father, two beings, known and distinguished from each other, were nevertheless united together in one great object, that of promoting the happiness, and accomplishing the re-

demption and salvation of man. That there is nothing unreasonable in this interpretation,—that it is not an unnatural or unusual mode of explaining the language of the text,—that similar phraseology, bearing the construction now put upon it, is elsewhere adopted, and adopted too by Christ himself, may be seen by referring to John, xvii. 20—23: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: *I in them, and thou in me,* that they may be made perfect in one." Here Christ is his own interpreter of the words of the text. We have here his own explanation of them. He distinctly states in what sense this unity of which he speaks, between himself and God, is to be understood. He prays, you will observe, that he and his disciples may be one, as he and the Father were one. "I in them, and thou in me," says Christ. But how is Christ to be in us? Not surely in nature or person, but by the power and influence of his spirit. So, in like manner, God is in Christ, not in essence and substance, but by the holy spirit which he breathed into him, and the power and wisdom which he communicated to him.

This use and meaning of the word 'one' is also justified by the language of the Apostle Paul, to be found in 1 Corinthians iii. 8.: "He that planteth and he that watereth are one;" not one person, one being, but *one* in object, design, and pursuit. In this sense God and Christ are one,—the first having planted, having given birth to, while the other watched and watered and tended, that tree of life which was destined for the healing of the nations.

Having thus explained the text, not by the help of any hypothesis of our own, but simply by comparing its language with that contained in other similar passages of Scripture, I shall now proceed to the consideration of the general question; WHAT IS THE UNION WHICH IS ASSERTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT TO EXIST BETWEEN GOD AND CHRIST? Is there any ground for the belief that that union is a union of natures, such a union as thereby to constitute Christ the same being with God himself, and to entitle him to all the honours of supreme Divinity?

In refusing to Christ a homage of this description, in denying that he is really and truly God, in maintaining the inferiority and subordination of the Son to the Father, we are actuated by no desire to lower our Saviour in the rank of existence, or to place him among a different order of beings

from that assigned him in Scripture. Insinuations to this effect are, I know, often thrown out against us, for the purpose, no doubt, of exciting feelings of aversion and opposition to our opinions, as if it were our object to degrade Christ, to diminish that reverential and grateful admiration with which his holy and majestic character ought ever to be regarded. I trust I need not say, in the presence of those whom I am now addressing, that such imputations are most unfounded and unjust; that the views which we hold of the person of Christ are held because, whether rightly or wrongly, they are deemed by us to be scriptural; because we believe that they render Christianity a more reasonable and consistent scheme, and reflect upon the character of Christ a beauty and a glory which attract towards him the strongest and warmest feelings of admiring and affectionate attachment. Our sole object is truth. We have nothing to gain by error. Our desire and endeavour is to ascertain what the revelation of the mind and will of God is; and having, as we think, ascertained it, by the best use of the various means and appliances in our power, to assert it openly and abide by it steadily, not heeding whether it be popular or unpopular, alike regardless of the frowns of the bigot and the menaces of the fanatic, and caring only for this, that

we have sought the truth in the love of it, and are ready to give to every man that asketh us a reason for the faith that is in us.

Let me, then, begin by saying, that, with the most orthodox believers, as they are called, we agree thus far, that between God and Christ there existed a union of such a kind, and to such an extent, as never existed, as far at least as is known to us, between any other creature and the eternal Creator. It is on account of this union, of this relation between the two, that we hail and rejoice in Christ as an instructor, master, deliverer, and saviour. It is because God was with him, dwelt in him, spoke by him, and acted by him, that we feel he is entitled to be regarded as our authorized teacher and lawgiver, upon whose word we may safely rely, and to whose laws we are implicitly to bow. But I need hardly tell you that the great point of difference between us and those of our fellow Christians who are opposed to us, is not whether between the mind of Christ and the mind of God there was not an intercommunion which rendered the one the fittest revealer and interpreter of the will of the other, but whether the one and the other were truly the same individual being or person, identified by the possession of a common nature, of the essential attributes and perfections of Deity. It is against this opinion that we pro-

test, and protest earnestly, as unreasonable and unchristian; contradictory in itself, and involving the Scriptures in contradiction; loading Christianity with the weight of objections which it ought not to have imposed upon it, and enveloping the character of Christ in such a cloud of mystery and incongruity as greatly to mar its simplicity and impair its beauty.

In order to bring the subject before you in as clear and intelligible a form as I can, I would beg you first to consider what we are to understand by the words *Christ*, *Jesus Christ*, and what by the word *God*. Suppose you were asked, Who is Christ? What would be your answer? It is he, you might say, who in the time of Augustus Cæsar was born in Judæa, who presented himself to the Jews as their long-expected Messiah, who wrought many wonderful miracles in attestation of his claims to this character, and who, after a short life passed in labours of benevolence and mercy, was put to death on the cross, and on the third day of his burial rose from the dead, and in a little while ascended up into heaven. Now the being of whom this is said, who went through these successive scenes and changes, who was born, and suffered and died, could not, in the nature of things, be himself the very and eternal God: it is impossible; and all admit it to be so. What, then, are

we to understand by the words *Jesus Christ*? Can we divide and separate them, and call the first the creature, the servant, the sent of God, and the last the supreme God himself? No, we cannot. The Scriptures will not allow us to do so. They forbid our considering these names as expressive of different persons, or beings, or natures. According to them the one may be used for the other, the one and the other meaning the same person. The terms are, what is called, interchangeable. The Scriptures tell us plainly and expressly, that the Christ is Jesus, and that Jesus is the Christ; that it was Christ who suffered and died and rose from the dead, and that God hath made that same Jesus whom the Jews had crucified both Lord and Christ. "It is Christ that died," says Paul, "yea, rather, that is risen again." The Christ, then, is Jesus, and Jesus is the Christ. Consequently neither the one nor the other of these appellatives can be substituted for the word *God*, it being impossible that God can suffer or that God can die. If, again, we were asked what we mean by the term *God*, we might reply, with the Apostle Paul, that he is the king eternal, immortal, invisible: and by this definition, therefore, we are likewise precluded from ascribing this title, in its strict and highest sense, to Jesus Christ. There are many things said by Christ which it would be

folly, nay, impiety, to say of the one living and true God. The unavoidable inference seems to be, that Christ and God are two distinct and different beings, and that to say of Christ he is the Supreme God, is nothing less than a direct and palpable contradiction to the assertions of Scripture. How, then, are we to understand the language of those who maintain that Christ is God? In what sense is such phraseology to be taken? Plainly, and literally, and according to the common acceptation of terms, it cannot by any possibility be true. Take up the New Testament, open it where you will, and you will find that Christ is spoken of, and speaks of himself, in a manner which it would be monstrous and shocking to apply to the Deity. For instance, we read that Jesus wept. You cannot say that God wept. Jesus cried with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" You cannot say that this is the exclamation of God. "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." These words could never have been uttered by God. What, then, is meant by those who contend that Christ is God? It is obvious that it must be meant in some sense very different from the plain and simple one. It must be manifest to every man that the being who was born, and tried, and tempted, and suffered, and died, could not himself be the living, unchange-

able, everlasting God. What is meant, then, by the assertion that Jesus Christ is God, the true, the supreme God? How is such an opinion to be maintained in the face of the whole history and language of Christ, which, so far from being the life and language of God, is the very reverse of what in such a case it *would* and *must* have been?

To meet this difficulty, and to escape the gross and palpable absurdity of ascribing to the Deity limited knowledge, and limited power, dependance, suffering and death, man, most rashly and presumptuously, as it appears to me, has speculated upon the nature or essence of God, has boldly rushed in where angels fear to tread, and upon a subject where he knows nothing, of which he is most profoundly ignorant, concerning which no data are given him, and which ought therefore to have imposed upon him a deep, unbroken, reverential silence,—he has advanced pretensions to knowledge not more remarkable for the arrogance than for the folly and mischievousness of their assumption. In order to clear the notion of Christ's supreme Deity from the charge of a direct point-blank contradiction to reason and revelation, certain hypotheses have been put forth respecting the nature of God and the person of Christ, upon the two most important of which I shall now proceed to offer a few observations. And I hope that

in doing so you will pardon me for leading your thoughts to the contemplation of matters so remote from human cognizance and understanding.

I confess I view with utter amazement the manner in which man has dared to theorize on so awful and mysterious a subject as that of the mode of the divine existence. I am confounded when I think that he should have spoken upon such a theme like one who had been admitted within the veil, and to whose vision had been laid open the secret and retired paths of the Great Invisible. If you say, Why call our attention to such a subject as that of the nature of God, or of the manner of his existence, when, in truth, we neither *do* know nor *can* know anything about it? I would echo the sentiment, and say with you, Why indeed? What right has any one, for the sake of upholding a favourite or preconceived opinion, to advance hypotheses respecting the nature or essence of God, for which not an atom of authority exists save in his own teeming imagination? Remember, it is not we, it is not the Unitarian Christian who would press upon your attention matters like these. On the contrary, our views of Christianity would rather lead you away from them,—would withdraw your minds from mazes and labyrinths, where they can only wander amidst perplexity and darkness impene-

trable and inextricable. As Unitarian Christians our language is,—The Bible, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, inculcates, in the plainest and most positive form, the doctrine that there is one God, and none other but *he*. The Evangelists and Apostles, with equal force and clearness, teach us also that Jesus Christ is his Son and servant, who freely gave up his life in the cause of human salvation—suffered and died, as he had lived and laboured, to do good to the souls and bodies of men; and that in reward of this, his perfect work, his perfect obedience, he was raised from the dead, and advanced by the Supreme Being to the highest honours of the heavenly kingdom. This, we affirm,—and make our appeal to your understandings and consciences for the correctness of the affirmation,—this, we affirm, is the plain, simple, uniform, uncompromising statement of the Scriptures of truth. And with this we are satisfied. With this statement we rest contented. We ask not how so much of the power and wisdom of God was imparted to Christ; how, in what manner, and by what means the mind of Christ was brought into immediate communion with the mind of God. It is sufficient for us to know that such was the fact, that there *was* this connexion between our Lord and the God who sent him. We do not puzzle ourselves about the

abstract quality or essence of unity, about what it is that constitutes the oneness of a thing. We know what we mean by one mind, one consciousness, one will; and, agreeably to the sense in which we employ it of ourselves, we adopt it in our views and descriptions of God. And so, when it is said that Jesus Christ was raised up by God, was inspired by God, was exalted by God, was glorified by God, we receive it in the natural and customary meaning of the words. We consider Jesus Christ and God as *two* distinct and different beings; the one as the Creator, the other as the creature; the one as the giver, the other as the receiver; the one as the sender, the other as the sent; the one as independent, the other as dependent; the one as self-subsisting, the other as subsisting by the will and power of a superior. This, we say, is the doctrine positively and constantly taught in the Scriptures; and, abiding by this, and not striving to be wise above what is written, we would keep our minds from plunging into depths beyond their power and skill to fathom. Happy would it have been if Christians generally had been content with these simple, intelligible, and comprehensive views,—satisfied that between Christ and God there existed such a connexion, such a relation as entitled the one to be the promulgator and expounder of the laws of the other,

as rendered him worthy of our entire confidence and of our implicit obedience.

But with these rational and scriptural views Christians have, unfortunately, not been content. They have contended that the union between God and Christ is a union of natures, such a union as, in fact, to constitute them one being or person. And as it is impossible, for the reasons before assigned, to make this doctrine square with the plain signification of the current language of Scripture, they have had recourse to the most extraordinary hypotheses concerning the nature of God, resolving or dividing that nature into parts, portions, or distinctions, and speaking of essences, and hypostases, and substances, and processions, as if they were realities passing before their eyes, or facts coming within the reach of their experience.

Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity supposes that in the Godhead there are three persons or distinctions, known by the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that the Son, the second of these persons or distinctions, was hypostatically united with Jesus Christ, so as, by this union, to constitute one person.

"In the unity of the Godhead," says the Confession of Faith of the Kirk of Scotland, "there be three persons, of one substance, power, and

eternity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." "The Lord Jesus Christ," says the Assembly's Catechism, "being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever." "The Son," says the second of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, "begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and the manhood, were joined together in one person never to be divided, whereof is *one Christ,* very God and very man." And so the creed, commonly called the Athanasian Creed, describes Christ as "perfect God and perfect man, equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood, who, although he be God and man, yet he is not *two* but *one* Christ."

Now, my first remark is, that the language used in these creeds and confessions is plainly and decidedly unscriptural. Nothing is said in Scripture about there being three persons in the unity of the Godhead. Nothing is there said of Christ's being the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father. Nothing is there said about two whole and perfect natures being joined together

in one person. So far are such expressions from being found in the Bible, or anything like them, I cannot conceive a wider departure from scriptural language than these terms exhibit. But passing this by, the point to which I desire now to direct your attention is this, that, for the doctrine of the Trinity as commonly received, and as laid down in the creeds and formularies just referred to, there is not in the Scriptures,—even admitting for a moment the general proposition that Christ is God,—there is not in the Scriptures, for the doctrine as above stated, the *shadow* of a foundation. According to every scheme of the Trinity which has ever come before me, Christ is declared to be God by virtue of the union, with his human nature, of the Son, the second person or distinction of the sacred three. Now, I say, that taking up the language of Scripture, and construing it in the most literal manner possible, there is not for *this* doctrine the semblance of a proof. What we *do* find in the Scriptures, according to the showing of Trinitarians themselves, and adopting for a moment their own peculiar phraseology, is, not that the Son, the second person of the Trinity, dwelt in Christ, but that the Father, the first person, dwelt in him. Observe, Christ does not say, the *Son* dwelleth in me, I live by the *Son*, I and the *Son* are one; but his language uniformly

is, "the *Father* dwelleth in me; I live by the *Father*; I am in the *Father* and the *Father* in me; I and my *Father* are one; as the *Father* taught me, I speak these things; I speak that which I have seen with my *Father*; the *Father* gave me a commandment what I should say." Granting, for argument's sake, the doctrine of the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ,—it is demonstrable, nevertheless, that there is no ground whatever, if we look to the Scriptures, for any such distinctions in the divine nature as those usually contended for by Trinitarians. For these distinctions or divisions there is not, I repeat it, an iota of evidence to be gathered from the Sacred Volume. Of whatever kind or description the union between God and Christ may be alleged to be, it was a union with the Father, the first person, (to borrow the language of the Trinitarian,) and not with the Son, the second person. The question, therefore, comes to this, *Was the Supreme God, the Father, so united with Christ as to form by this union one person or being?* Did He, the infinite, the unchangeable, the eternal one, become incarnate and take upon himself a human form?

To the consideration of this more general theme I will now turn; but as I am anxious not to misrepresent the opinions of others, I will state the views which are commonly entertained of the doc-

trine of the Deity of Christ in the language of the most sober and considerate of its advocates. In speaking of the divine and human natures of Christ, Dr. Tomline, the late Bishop of Winchester, in his Elements of Christian Theology*, says, "The essential properties of one nature were not communicated to the other nature: Christ was at once Son of God and Son of Man; he was at the same time both mortal and eternal; mortal as the Son of Man, in respect of his humanity, eternal as the Son of God, in respect of his divinity: each kept his respective properties distinct, without the least confusion in their most intimate union. One person was formed by these two natures, as the Council of Chalcedon expresses it, without confusion, immutably, inseparably, indivisibly." "The conclusion," says Dr. Pye Smith†, "which, to my most serious conviction, flows from the whole of the prophetic and apostolic testimony concerning Christ, received in simplicity and sincerity, without hiding or evading any part of that testimony, is that the person of Jesus, the Christ, the Lord, Redeemer, and Saviour of mankind, comprises the unique and mysterious union of humanity and deity; the human nature with all its proper

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* Vol. ii. p. 141.

† Scripture Testimony of the Messiah, vol. iii. p. 400.

qualities, and the divine nature with all its essential perfections." "We readily avow, that we pretend not to know in what manner the divine and human natures, which we attribute to the Messiah, are united in his sacred person. We believe that in this respect, especially, 'his name is wonderful,' and that 'no one knoweth the Son except the Father.' The Scriptures appear to us, on the one hand, to teach the existence of such a union as produces a personal oneness; and, on the other, to exclude the notion of transmutation or confusion of the essential properties of either nature with respect to the other*."

My first objection to this doctrine, as far as I can attach any meaning to it, is its positive and absolute impossibility. According to any sense which the human understanding can put upon it, it cannot in the nature of things be true. That the power and presence of God may be more strongly and sensibly felt by one of his creatures than by another, no one pretends to deny. That a more direct and intimate communion may exist between the divine mind and the human mind than we have had any experience or consciousness of, it would be folly to dispute. That this *was* especially and preeminently the case with Jesus

* Scripture Testimony of the Messiah, vol. ii. p. 372.

Christ, we not only believe, but rejoice in believing. But that the nature of God was united to the nature of man, so as to form one person, and yet without any confusion or commingling of their natures, seems to me to involve a direct and palpable contradiction.

The Creator is infinite and eternal; whose existence is neither bounded by space, nor measured by time; whose dwelling is the "light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the mind of man," and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. Is it possible, then, that this nature can be contracted within the dimensions of a human body,—can be covered with a garment of flesh,—can be circumscribed within the limits of an earthly tabernacle? What, then, *is* or *can be* meant by the union of God and Christ, except that Christ enjoyed, in a fuller and more especial manner than any other creature, the presence, the power, the favour, the influence of God?

If Christ had been God by nature,—if he had come into the world with the nature of God within him or upon him,—why should he not, even when he was but an infant of a day old, have manifested as much power and as much wisdom as at any after-period of his life? Why should not the babe Christ have discoursed in the arms of his mother, as he afterwards discoursed in the courts of the

temple? Why, if he had been God by nature, is nothing remarkable said to have fallen from his lips till he had reached the age of twelve? Of the nature or essence of God, abstractedly considered, we know nothing, and it becomes us, therefore, to say nothing; but this we know, that it is essential to his nature, or at least that it belongs essentially to the idea we have of his nature, that he be infinite, unchangeable, omnipotent, omniscient, and immortal. Now, I ask, does it not appear to us in the shape of a thing impossible, to unite together, and at the same time to keep separate and distinct from each other, unlimited power and power that is limited,—the knowledge which has no boundary, and the knowledge which is circumscribed,—the property that is unchangeable, and the property that is mutable? You cannot take from infinity; you cannot weaken omnipotence; you cannot alter unchangeableness; you cannot subject to death that which by nature is above death. But infinity may swallow up that which is finite, and the darkness of ignorance be lost in the effulgent splendour of omniscience. This I can conceive; but that the one can exist in inseparable conjunction with the other,—that these opposite and inconsistent qualities can be predicated of the same being,—that the same person can do all things and not do all things, can know

all things and not know all things,—appears to me as much a contradiction as to say, that we can be and not be at the same time, or that light and darkness can exist together. Talk of transubstantiation, of its inconsistency and absurdity! Why, the belief of that, as compared with this, is as the straining at a gnat to the swallowing of a camel.

My next objection to this doctrine is, that it is not found in Scripture; and that so far from serving as a key to unlock its difficulties and intricacies and lay open its hidden meanings, it shuts them up in far greater perplexity and obscurity than before. The Unitarian Christian points to the whole history of Christ, to his birth, to his baptism, to his temptation, to his sufferings, death, and resurrection; he points to the constant deportment and the uniform language of our Lord, to the prayers which he offered up to God, and to the words which he addressed to his disciples, as plain and irrefragable proofs of the supremacy of one God the Father, and the subordination to him of his Son Jesus Christ.

And how is this evidence met and answered? By supposing that Christ possessed two natures, the human and the divine; and that when he spoke and acted, felt and prayed as a dependent and inferior being, as we know that he often did, he is to be considered as having done so in his

human capacity, being still the supreme and independent God in his divine nature. But where in Scripture is it said or intimated that Christ is a being possessing two natures, and that each of those natures spoke and acted distinctly and separately from the other? We say: To the law and the testimony: produce your authority: place your finger on that passage in the Bible which says that by Jesus Christ we are sometimes to understand the Supreme Being, sometimes the man Jesus, and sometimes God and man united. Do this, and we bow instant submission; but if you cannot do this, cease to wonder at our rejection of your irrational and unauthorized assumption.

It may be said, perhaps, that the Scriptures require this mode of interpretation, and that though they do not directly assert it, they nevertheless not obscurely imply it.

To this my answer is, that so far from requiring it, so far from implying it, the general language of Scripture is rendered by it a perfect riddle; and a meaning is given to the commonest forms of expression totally different from that which they have ever before been used to signify. When Jesus Christ speaks of himself as sent by the Father, as obeying the will of the Father, as receiving commandment from the Father,—when he

declares that his Father is greater than he,—and when, with reference to some anticipated divine judgement, he says, "of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only*,"—we are told that this language has respect solely to the humanity of Christ, that in these words Christ spoke of himself in *one* only of the natures which he possessed, and that therefore no conclusion is to be drawn from it adverse to the doctrine of his supreme deity. Now, admitting for a moment the truth of this hypothesis; granting to the Trinitarian the right of putting such a construction upon the words of our Lord; what are the consequences necessarily resulting from it? Why, they are these: that Christ is not *one*, but *two* beings or persons, and that the asserted union of the divine and human natures is, in fact, no union of natures at all. To call it so, while it is admitted that each nature retained its own appropriate essential attributes, and did not participate in the characteristic properties of the other, is of all misnomers the grossest and the most palpable. When Christ denies his knowledge of the day and hour on which a certain predicted event is to take place, here,—in this respect at

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* Mark, xiii. 32. Matth. xxiv. 36.

least, according to the representation of Trinitarians themselves,—here, the divine and human natures were *not* united. What the one was conscious of, the other was *not* conscious of. So when Christ was tempted and suffered, we are told that it was his human nature only that suffered and was tempted; the divine nature could not suffer and could not be tempted. It therefore follows, that, in this respect also, Christ in his human nature stood apart from Christ in his divine nature. Here, again, they were *not* united. What the one thought, the other did *not* think. What the one felt, the other did *not* feel. What the one suffered, was *not* suffered by the other. God was *not* one with Christ in his ignorance of a certain day,—he was *not* one with him in his temptations and trials,—he was *not* one with him in his sufferings and death. The one had a consciousness of what the other had not; that is, there were two distinct consciousnesses,—two minds,—and, consequently, two distinct persons or beings. This is a conclusion demonstratively flowing from the principles and premises laid down by the Trinitarians themselves.

The passage just referred to, in which Christ denies his knowledge of a certain distant period, is couched in terms which deserve a more marked attention than the passing observation already

bestowed upon it. Observe the climax; how Christ rises from man to angels, and from angels to the Son, and from the Son to the Father. Jesus might have contented himself with saying, that no man knew when that day of judgement, of which he had been speaking, would take place; but, as if anxious to impress upon the minds of his hearers that the knowledge of this circumstance had been confided to no one on earth, and that it remained wrapped up in the impenetrable counsels of the Most High, he first declares that no man knew it, next that the angels in heaven did not know it, then that not even the Son was acquainted with it, and last of all that the Father only knew it. Now what evidence can go beyond this to prove that Christ and God are two distinct and different beings,—the one dependent and derived, the other independent and underived,—I am utterly at a loss to conceive.

But admitting the possibility of this doctrine of the union of two natures in Christ so as to constitute one being or person, how does it tally, I ask, with what Christ says of himself, and with what is said of him by the Apostles? I have already referred to some passages of Scripture with which it is totally and irreconcileably discordant. I will now call your attention more directly and specifically to this point. I say, then, let this doctrine

of the two natures in Christ be applied to the interpretation of Scripture. Put it fairly to the test. You, the Trinitarian, say, that Christ is both God and man, and that when he speaks of himself as a dependent being, which he is continually doing, he is to be considered as speaking only in his human nature. Be it so. Adopt this opinion; apply it as the principle by which our Lord's words concerning himself are to be interpreted, and see how they will then read. *My Father*, says Christ, *is greater than I.* No words can express more plainly and unequivocally his inferiority to the Father than these words do. Yes, it is replied, so they would be admitted to do if Jesus Christ had not possessed two natures. But possessing two natures, being both God and man, he here speaks in his manhood only, and not in his Godhead. So, then, let the passage be read: let it be looked at as reflected in the mirror of this interpretation. "My Father is greater than I;" that is, "My divine nature is greater than my human nature." Now I would put it to the understanding and conscience of any sober, reflecting, unprejudiced person, whether he seriously thinks that this *can* be the meaning of the passage?

But to proceed: *I came not*, says Christ again, *to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* This is not, and could not be, the language of God,

but it *is* the language of our Lord. Yes, it is replied, but he here speaks in his human nature only. Then, with this gloss upon them, how will the words read? "I, as man, came not to do the will of my human nature, but the will of my divine nature." It really concerns me to offer anything even in the way of illustration, that has the slightest appearance of burlesquing the Scriptures, of throwing over them an air of ridicule; but the fault, if there be any, is not mine; it attaches to the system or theory of which it is but the practical exemplification. I wish to show you, by specific instances, how the Scriptures will read with this principle of the two natures in Christ fastened upon them. To quote again his own declaration: *I can of mine own self do nothing.* Never were words uttered more repugnant than these to the doctrine of our Lord's supreme divinity. And how is this repugnance disposed of? By supposing that Christ is here speaking only in his human nature, in his condition and capacity as a man. What! are the words, I, myself, mine own self,—uttered too without any reserve, without any qualification, without any the most distant intimation that they are to be understood in a peculiar sense,—are these plain words to be considered as meaning only a part of himself, not his whole self, not his entire person, but only a part or portion of his person?

I can of mine own self do nothing, that is, we are told, "I can in my human nature do nothing." Can you, I ask, be satisfied with this version? Can you really believe that this was what Christ intended to express? Would any one, who had been present when these words were uttered, have ever dreamt of putting upon them such a construction as this?

I might go on producing many other passages of like import with those now referred to; but, as this is not necessary for the purpose I have in view, I shall content myself with one specimen more. *In that day*, says Christ to his disciples, (alluding to the time of his ascension, and when he should be personally withdrawn from them,) *ye shall ask me nothing. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* Here is an express and positive injunction, given by our Lord himself to his disciples, not to pray to him after he was removed from their presence. There seems to be no possible way of evading the direction thus so clearly and unconditionally laid down; nor *is* there any except by the help of some such hypothesis as that now under our consideration. With the light of this hypothesis shining upon the passage, it will read thus. "In that day ye shall ask me (my human nature) nothing. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father (my divine nature) in my name (in the name of my human nature) he (that

is, I myself, in my divine nature,) will give it you." Now I say, boldly and unequivocally, that a doctrine which requires the Scriptures to be paraphrased in such a way as this,—and this *is* the way and the only way in which they can be paraphrased if it be admitted that Jesus Christ is both God and man, the divine and human natures being united together in his person,—a doctrine, I say, requiring such a mode of interpreting the language of Scripture as this, cannot possibly be a true doctrine and worthy of our acceptation. It carries, in its own application, its own refutation. The more it is brought into direct contact and connexion with the language of Scripture, the more glaring will its absurdity appear, the more manifest and striking will be its incongruity and inconsistency. As long as we keep it at a distance, and speak of it in vague general terms, without bringing it to the test, without a direct and specific application of it to given passages of Scripture, its deformity escapes observation, and its falsehood eludes detection. But take it as the principle upon which the language of the Bible concerning Christ is to be explained, and show by particular instances how it really and practically exhibits itself in this form of its existence, and my firm belief is, that, in every case where this trial is made, this process is pursued, the con-

sequence will be the entire rejection of the notion of Christ's supreme divinity,—a deep conviction that it is utterly untenable, and totally incredible.

Most seriously and solemnly would I ask, Can it be believed that when Jesus Christ spoke of himself as inferior to the Father, as deriving all his power and authority from the Father, he meant only that his human nature was dependent upon his divine nature? If we had been present when he declared to the mother of Zebedee's children, *To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give*, could we have gone away with the idea that he meant only to say, that it was *not* in his power as man to do it, though as God it *was* in his power? On this supposition the Apostles might have gone forth to the world and have said to one, Christ suffered; to another, Christ did not suffer; to this man, Christ died; to that man, Christ did not die. Now, suppose that they had actually done this, and, on being asked what they meant by it, they had said, In the first instance we spoke of his human nature, in the other of his divine nature; would they not have been despised for such a system of miserable equivocation? And shall we attribute conduct like this to the Holy Jesus,—to him in whose mouth there was no guile, who spake openly to the people, and in secret said nothing? To interpret the language

of Christ in this manner, observed Mr. Emlyn, is the same as if we were to say of a man, who had shut one of his eyes, and then looked at an object with the other, that he did not see the object at which he was looking, meaning, that he did not see it with the eye that was shut, though he did see it with the eye that was open.

One would imagine that, if anything were plain and intelligible, if any words were incapable of being misunderstood, it would have been the words, I, myself, mine own self. And yet, according to the representation of Trinitarians, these words, when used by Christ, have the most singular and extraordinary signification, sometimes importing one thing, sometimes another, and sometimes another still. Who would have believed that the most difficult and perplexing words contained in the New Testament are the simple expressions of, I and myself? Suppose that Christ had said in so many direct terms, (what he *has* said indirectly, though not less unequivocally,) I am *not* the supreme God, I am *not* the very and eternal God, but the son and servant of God: What, upon the theory of the two natures, would it have signified? It would not have availed the Unitarian a whit more than the texts to which he *now* makes his appeal. For, still it would have been said, Christ here spoke of his human nature

simply, and not of his divine nature. His denial of supreme divinity is to be taken with this understanding, and with this limitation. It means only that he was not God in one respect, though he was God in another respect. In this way, let the language of Christ have been ever so diametrically opposed to the doctrine of his absolute deity, it would have been perfectly easy to evade its force, to explain away its meaning. I do not see, by what possible contrivance any words could be so arranged as to exempt them from the perversion to which such a license exposes them. In truth, and in fact, where is the difference between the sentence 'I am not the supreme God,' and "I can of mine own self do nothing,"—between the words 'I am not the supreme God,' and "I know not the day or the hour" when a certain predicted event is to take place,—between the declaration 'I am not the supreme God,' and "In that day ye shall ask me nothing,"—between the proposition 'I am not the supreme God,' and the assertion "My Father is greater than I"? In each of these cases, are not the first declaration and the second exactly of the same import, and expressive of precisely the same idea? I should like to ask a believer in the deity of Christ, how a Unitarian could produce stronger evidence in favour of the distinguishing article of his faith than *that* which

he *does* produce? It seems to me that it is not in the power of human language to convey his notion of the strict unity and supremacy of God the Father, and of the subordinate authority of Jesus Christ, more decidedly and clearly than is done by the passages above cited, and others of a similar description with which the Scriptures abound. If he wished for stronger, or more unequivocal expressions, he could not have them; for language does not supply them. In precision, in strength, in force and fullness, nothing can go beyond the evidence with which he is actually furnished.

Throughout, the language of Christ—when speaking of himself, of his own powers and endowments—is the language not of a God, not of the supreme and eternal Creator, but of one commissioned by God, and acting under the authority of God. He declares that God gave him a commandment what he should say and what he should do; that the doctrine which he preached was not his own, but the Father's who sent him; that he sought not his own glory, but the glory of his heavenly Father. Hence, he always referred the works which he performed, not to any intrinsic power of his own, but solely to the power of his Father; not as a proof that he was himself God, but that God had sent him, that God had taught him, and that God was present with him. He

constantly prayed to God, looked up to him for strength and consolation, and when about to expire on the cross, commended to him his departing spirit. What stronger proof *can* we have of the inferiority of Christ to the Father than the language of submission, dependence, and supplication which was ever on his lips? It would, indeed, be strange, passing strange, that, being himself the supreme God, he should be constantly making use of terms and expressions implying directly the reverse. And in accordance with what Christ has said of himself is the language made use of by the Apostles. They everywhere represent him as a prophet raised up and inspired by God; as receiving from God the promise of the holy spirit; as approved of God; as honoured and glorified by God, and exalted by him to be a prince and a Saviour. Speaking of his power and authority, their language is, "It *pleased* the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. God *giveth* not the spirit by measure unto him. He hath *given* him authority over all flesh. He hath *given* him authority to execute judgement." This is the strain in which the Evangelists and Apostles constantly speak of Christ; and that strain could not possibly have been adopted towards a being whom they knew or believed to be the supreme God. These, and abundance of passages similar to these, prove

that whatever power, whatever authority, whatever dignity Christ possessed, it was not inherent —it was derived, it was dependent. But God, the everlasting Creator, without beginning of days or end of years, is underived, is independent, has all power within himself and of himself. It is the property, the necessary and essential property of the everlasting God to bestow, not to receive; to give, not to be given to; to confer gifts, not to have them conferred upon him. Christ received; Christ was given to; Christ was honoured, exalted, glorified by another, and could not, therefore, be in himself the living and true God. This title belongs alone to the Father. He is the Lord of lords and the God of gods. He is high over all the earth, "power above all powers," single and one, the undivided God.

To this mass of overpowering evidence, as it seems to me, there is always at hand the one invariable reply, All this, so expressive of inferiority to God and dependence upon him, is to be understood of the human nature of Christ, and not of his divine nature. And, with this convenient ready-made answer, all argument is dismissed; the weightiest proofs are accounted trifles light as air; and declarations and assertions, clear and bright in their meaning as the sun at noon-day, are thrown out of view, as if they signified nothing.

But, assuredly, I have a right to ask, Who gave you authority to say, *here* Christ speaks as man, *here* as God, and *here* as God-man; *these* words are to be understood in the *first* distinction of his nature, and *these* in the *second* distinction of his nature. The Scriptures assert, without any qualification or reservation, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered pain, and hunger, and weariness; was tempted and grieved; was tried, and learnt obedience by the things which he suffered; was condemned and crucified, and raised from the dead by the mighty power of God. Am I to understand all this as applying only to a part of the person of Christ? What a monstrous proposition! that Christ should be a being, compounded of two natures in one person, and yet, that, throughout the Scriptures, the word Christ should generally signify, not the person of Christ, not his real and entire person, but only a part of himself, and that the most inferior part! And, to add still more to the extravagance of this hypothesis, all this is supposed to take place without the slightest intimation having been given that such a meaning was intended; without a single hint having been dropped, that the words, Christ and Son of God, were used in any other sense than their plain and obvious one. Can this be possible? I believe not. I believe that such a supposition would never have

been dreamt of, had not men been obliged to have recourse to it for the sake of supporting a favourite system,—a system to which, from education, habit, deference to antiquity, or other reasons, they had become attached.

Mark, now, the difference in the nature and kind of proof respectively produced by the Unitarian and the Trinitarian. The former, the Unitarian, not only appeals to Scripture in behalf of the truth of his doctrine, but states that doctrine in the very language of Scripture itself. The latter, the Trinitarian, also appeals to the Scriptures in proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, but, strange to say, he can find no language in Scripture by which to express the doctrine which he holds to be so important. But this is not all. The Unitarian, besides proving positively his own doctrine, that the Father is the only true God, does more. He proves, negatively also, that the Son is *not* the only true God. Here is a marked and important difference in the kind of proof brought forward by the respective parties. The Trinitarian, though he maintains that the doctrine of the Trinity is to be *deduced* from Scripture, never attempts to maintain that the Unitarian doctrine, which asserts that the Father is the only true God, is *denied* in Scripture. He never attempts to show that the Scriptures deny that the Father is greater than

the Son, and that the Son, therefore, is dependent upon the Father. How, then, does he endeavour to establish his own doctrine?—how does he go about to prove that though the Father is greater than the Son, the Son nevertheless is equal with the Father? Upon what plea does he strive to reconcile these apparently contradictory propositions? He labours to do this, by inventing a curious metaphysical hypothesis of three persons in the nature of God, and of two natures in the one person of Christ; and then, by the arbitrary application of this theory to the interpretation of certain passages of Scripture, he thinks to escape the charge of involving Scripture in plain and palpable contradiction.

In this discourse it has been my aim,—to which I have chiefly confined myself,—to show that this hypothesis, of the union of two natures in the person of Christ, does *not* answer its designed purpose; that it does *not* reconcile one part of Scripture with another; that it is *not* free from the charge of entailing upon it inconsistency and contradiction; and that the very invention of such an hypothesis is, in itself, a proof of the falseness of the system which it is intended to support.

This, in a few words, is the course of argument which the Unitarian pursues in justification and vindication of his faith. He produces a variety

of passages from Scripture which affirm God to be one, and that one God to be the Father. He next proves, by passages equally numerous and striking, that Jesus Christ is represented in Scripture as inferior and subordinate to God the Father, deriving from him all his authority, and depending upon him for all his power. Upon this ground, upon the foundation of Prophets and Apostles, he builds the fabric of his faith, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

In these observations you will perceive that I have not aimed at exhibiting a general view of the evidence in favour of the strict unity of God. I have not even noticed some of the strongest passages in the Sacred Volume which might be alleged in its support. My object has been somewhat of a different kind. It has been to show what, as Unitarian Christians, we conceive the union between God and Christ to have been, viz. not a union of natures properly so called, but a union of purpose, affection, and operation; a union arising from an extraordinary and special communication from the mind of God to the mind of Christ. How that communication took place, in what way the spirit of God held intercourse with the spirit of our Lord, by what means our Saviour enjoyed so much of the divine wisdom and power, we know not, we pretend not to know. We are con-

tented with the plain fact, because the fact is all that is revealed to us. Those who go beyond the fact, and assume that, because Christ appeared in the form of God, armed with supernatural power, and endowed with extraordinary authority, he was, *therefore*, the very and eternal God himself, assume, for the reasons assigned in this discourse, what is not only *not* revealed in Scripture, but what is directly and decidedly opposed to it.

There is a sense, indeed, in which God may be said to be united to all his works, to every part of his creation; for he is everywhere, and the universe is filled with his presence. He walketh upon the wings of the wind, and he moveth in the paths of the waters. Though dwelling among the sanctities of heaven, he visits the tabernacles of earth, and has access to the chambers of the soul. In him we all live, and move, and have our being. And *generally*, wherever there is a particular manifestation of his power, wisdom, and glory, *there* he is said to be, and *there* to dwell. For this reason, Christ, who enjoyed so peculiar and intimate a communion with the Divine Being, is naturally and justly represented as one with whom God was, by whom God spake, and in whom God dwelt. But surely the presence or communion of God with any thing or being does not make that thing or being to be God. When God is said to dwell

in the temple, the temple does not, on that account, become God. When God is said to dwell in us, and we in him, that dwelling does not make us to be Gods. When the spirit of God is said to dwell in our minds, we are not thereby converted into the spirit of God. That God was with Christ, that God dwelt in Christ, is a Scripture truth. We never thought of denying it. What we *do* deny is the inference which misguided reason has attempted to draw from it. We certainly do deny, we undoubtedly do reject, the conclusions of those who argue that, because God is said to dwell in Christ, therefore Christ is God. We say that the same mode of argument would equally prove that Zion is God, that the temple is God, that we are Gods, because God is said to dwell in Zion, and to dwell in us.

I here close the argument, and request your attention to one or two short reflections.

And first, how senseless is the clamour so often raised against us on the ground that our principles are constructed, not out of materials furnished by Scripture, but from suppositions and theories supplied by the inventive ingenuity of our own understandings! This, however, is but one among the many misrepresentations and calumnies to which we are constantly exposed. Every effort is used to prejudice the public mind against us, and

to prevent our claims from obtaining a fair, calm, deliberate, and impartial consideration. Even the Christian name is refused us; that name which we prize, and revere, and rejoice in, and for the honour of which none have contended more successfully, nor distinguished themselves in the defence of its rights more illustriously, than have those who held the principles which we hold. Yes, it is to the writings of Unitarian Christians that the advocate and defender of Christianity resorts, when he wishes to prepare and accomplish himself most worthily for the task which he has taken in hand. It is here, as to an armoury, that he goes and gathers up the weapons of keenest temper and weightiest metal wherewith to gird himself for the conflict and the struggle on which he is about to enter. And yet the very men by whose labours this benefit is obtained, from whose learning, and diligence, and zeal, and faithfulness these advantages are derived, who in past times toiled and suffered for the common cause, who devoted their days and nights, their whole lives, to the assertion and vindication of the truth of the Gospel,—in maintaining for Christianity its right and title to a heavenly descent,—these men, the Clarkes, the Lockes, the Lelands, the Lardners, are now to be robbed of that name in the possession of which they gloried, for the honours

of which they nobly contended, and in the spirit of which they lived and died, because, instead of adopting the Shibboleth of a party, they held fast to reasonable and scriptural views of Christian truth, and shrunk from speaking of the Deity in language presumptuously implying an acquaintance with his nature, to which man, in the blindness of his ignorance, has not the slightest pretensions.

And what, let me ask, is to be gained to the Christian cause by withholding the name of *Christian* from men who have thus laboured in its behalf, and have devoted their fine talents and learning to its illustration and defence? For be it known and remembered, be it impressed upon your minds, and treasured up there as an interesting and important fact, that many of those great and gifted men upon whom God has sent down so large a portion of his spirit, into whom he has breathed the purest and holiest inspirations of genius, are to be enrolled in the catalogue of Unitarians. There is the glorious triumvirate of Milton, Locke, and Newton—the like to which we may wait till the world's end before we see again,—and of this triumvirate Unitarianism claims the possession. And the claim, though sometimes affected to be disputed, is now established beyond all doubt. Would Christianity

lose nothing in the estimation of the wise and good by having the names of these illustrious men transferred from the list of its friends to that of its foes? Would the brow of infidelity be decked with no brighter laurels if, among the trophies of its conquests, it could number the subjection and homage of minds like these? Milton, Locke, and Newton! I know full well the reluctance which would be felt in separating these names from the Christian cause. I am well aware, when the sectarian or factious spirit does not intervene, how ready even the most orthodox believer, as he is called, is to claim on behalf of Christianity whatever weight and authority may attach to such names. To the unbeliever, he will talk earnestly of that evidence which could subdue and satisfy the grasping and inquisitive minds of these great men, and then, most inconsistently, will turn round to others of a different class, and gravely affirm that Unitarians are not Christians. Is it ignorance, or bigotry, or, what is still worse, hypocrisy, that has the largest share in this miserable proceeding?

Amidst the many and various efforts to misrepresent our principles, and to obstruct the progress of our cause, it is difficult so to restrain those indignant feelings that rise up within us as to prevent them from going forth in the shape of

harsh and bitter recrimination; but this is one, and not the least, of our Christian trials; and it becomes us to bear in mind that in this, as in all other things, we are required to act in the spirit of our glorious Leader,—not to return railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing for cursing.

We say, if we are mistaken, let our mistakes be corrected. If we err, let our errors be refuted. If we have fallen into absurdities, let our absurdities be exposed. But, in the name of truth and honesty, let us not be condemned without a hearing. Let us have a fair, a candid, and a righteous judgement. We ask no more: but this, we think, we have a right to demand. As to the charge of wishing to degrade Christ, we repell it with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. A wish to degrade the pure, the holy, the spotless, the great and glorified Saviour of man! Perish for ever the system which could prompt such a desire!

Our principles of interpretation—I speak of those which are adopted generally by us, by the most intelligent and thoughtful of our body,—are no other than the same which have received the sanction of theological scholars of various churches, and of the first rank and character. And there is this distinction which we may boast of, and a proud distinction it is, since the like to it belongs to no other party that I am aware of,—there is

this distinction which attaches to us, that the sense which we put upon the most important passages referring to the points in discussion between us and our Trinitarian brethren, is the very sense given to them by orthodox writers of the highest reputation. Destroy, I would say, every professed Unitarian commentary on the Scriptures now in existence, and there will still remain, in the writings of learned Trinitarians themselves, those expositions and explanations of Scripture by which our leading principles are maintained and defended. For the peculiar interpretations required by Calvinism, you must consult only commentators of Calvinistic opinions. For those needed by the Trinitarian, you must go to the writings of Trinitarians. But for those demanded by the Unitarian, you may have recourse to all—to the enlightened and liberal of all persuasions. Take from me the works of the Polish Brethren, the expositions of Lardner, Lindsey, Priestley, and Belsham, and leave me in possession of those of Erasmus, Grotius, Wetstein, Griesbach, Campbell, Archbishop Newcome, and Bishop Pearce, and in them, in the illustrations and explanations of Scripture contained in them, I shall find all that I need to warrant my reception of the Unitarian faith, and to enable me to assert and maintain it against the fiercest assaults of its enemies.

Lastly, if it be to God alone that we are authorized to pay our religious adoration, if it be to Him alone who is styled "The Father" that we pray for pardon and mercy and peace, for wisdom to guide us in the midst of our doubts and difficulties, and for grace to help us in the time of our need, it is because Jesus himself has so taught and so directed us. And, if we fear to bend the knee of devotion to any other being than the everlasting Jehovah, the one infinite and all-perfect spirit, it is because we are desirous of obeying the instructions, and of following the example of our Lord. When, however, we think of what Jesus was, and of what he has done for us; when we reflect upon the piety of his life, and the wisdom of his discourses, upon the dignity of his deportment, and the beneficence of his works; when we contemplate him as "the way, the truth, and the life"—as our "teacher, Saviour, and judge,"—we feel that he is every way entitled to all the honour, and all the reverence, and all the love which we can render to him, consistently with that first and highest homage, that supreme and perfect love, which we are required, and which he himself was accustomed, to give to "*his Father and our Father, to his God and our God*"; and we are ready to join with all our hearts in the apocalyptic song of "Worthy is the Lamb that was

slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Have we not all "one Lord, one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God and Father of all?" Then, let us feel as brethren; then, let us remember our common relationship; then, let our pride be humbled in the dust; then, let us honour all men; then, let us glorify God in our souls and bodies, for we are his, and to Him, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory through Jesus Christ now and for ever!

Note.—"If our Saviour had preached such a doctrine as that of the Trinity, it is remarkable that the Evangelists should not have stated it explicitly, and taken some pains to explain and enforce it. No doctrine could be more novel, none more important, and none more opposed to the rooted prejudices of the Jews. But, when we come to examine, we find nothing said in the three first Gospels which can have any direct bearing on the subject; and the introduction to the Gospel of John admits quite as good an interpretation, according to the Unitarian, as the Trinitarian hypothesis. The strong evidence which the four Gospels contain, that no one in the time of our Saviour thought him to be God, and the entire silence of the Evangelists on the subject of a Trinity in any form, are objections to this scheme not easily to be answered.

"In the Acts of the Apostles, we have a minute account of their preaching. It is to be supposed that, in promulgating the Christian religion among the heathen nations, the Apostles preached all its important doctrines. Yet he will read in vain, who shall expect to find anything relating to a Trinity in a single discourse

of theirs, which has been recorded. They preached that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that God had raised him from the dead; but they never spoke of his being 'the very and eternal God.' They never intimated that God exists in a three-fold nature, or in any other nature than that of the one true God."—*Sparkes's Letters to the Rev. Dr. Wyatt*, pp. 185, 186. Baltimore, 1820.

DISCOURSE II.

ROMANS xiv. 5.

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

THE subject to which your attention is now to be directed has reference to the grounds on which Unitarians rest the justification of their separation from the Established Church. Unless, for this separation, strong and satisfactory reasons could be assigned, it would lie open to deserved censure and reprobation. I am not one of those who think lightly of the advantages and blessings of union and concert on the one hand, or of the evils and disadvantages of division and disunion on the other. But union in the bonds of ignorance, of insincerity, of hypocrisy, of pretended outward agreement where there is a real internal discordance,—a union founded upon compromise and double dealing, upon the suppression of free thought and of all open honest avowal of opinion, —a union based upon such a foundation, and cemented by such ties as these, can be productive of no results but those which are degrading and debasing to the mind, which corrupt the very

fountains of the heart, and cut away from the soul the root of its moral and spiritual life.

To avoid such a hollow and deceitful union as this; to give to the law of conscience that rule and authority to which it is justly entitled; to allow to our thoughts that freedom from external controul in which the highest dignity of a human being consists; to possess, exercise, and enjoy the rights and privileges appertaining to us as the rational creatures of God, and the voluntary disciples of Jesus Christ, we feel ourselves constrained to secede from the worship and communion of the Church established by law.

It was Paul's earnest desire that the Corinthian Christians to whom he wrote should not be vexed and harassed by divisions and schisms. But what is the inference from this? That all Christians must think alike; or that any society of Christians assuming to be the only true church of Christ, has a right to impose whatever terms of communion it pleases, with which terms, if any one sees reason not to comply, his non-compliance, therefore, becomes criminal and sinful? Is this what we are to understand by the advice of the Apostle? So far from it, the whole life and conduct of this illustrious minister of Christ, his strongest language and most vigorous reasoning are to be regarded as a protest and remonstrance

against the prostration and subjection of the free and independent mind of man to the dictating and tyrannizing authority of his fellow-man. Friend as he was to harmony and peace in the Christian Church, he knew too much of man's nature to suppose that these blessings could only be secured by a uniformity of belief, or that it was at all desirable that they should be purchased by the sacrifice and surrender of the noblest rights and privileges with which our Creator has endowed us. What, then, was the schism which he deprecated, the discord which he dreaded? In order to understand what it was, we must consider what the union was which the Apostle so earnestly recommended, and the violation of which he so strongly condemned. Now, the bond of union between Christians, besides their common faith in the divine mission and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, was, not their agreement in judgement and opinion, but their mutual agreement in affection and brotherly love. *By this*, says Christ, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* This is no less the criterion of the Christian character than the foundation of Christian unity. Whoever so conducts himself as to alienate the affections of Christians from one another, to divide them into hostile and opposing factions, is, in the worst sense of the word, a

schismatic. It is manifest, from a variety of passages occurring in the Epistles of Paul, that he never dreamt of anything so wild and monstrous as the establishment among men of an entire uniformity of opinion. The point on which he dwelt, and which he was most anxious to enforce, was, *not* mutual agreement in all matters of opinion, but mutual indulgence and forbearance, the propriety of allowing to one another the enjoyment of his own peculiar views, and the duty of abstaining from all interference with the common rights of Christians, of not imposing terms of communion other than those which Christ himself has expressly enjoined. *Him that is weak*, says the Apostle, *receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth..... One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

The schism, then, against which the Apostle protested, and of which he warned his Corinthian disciples to beware, was not that arising from conscientious differences of opinion. Those differences, where they did exist, he urged them mutually to tolerate and respect. They had each a

right to form their own views, and it was not for one to assume the authority of dictating to, or of domineering over, the mind of another. The division of which he was most afraid, the disunion which he most reprobated, was that which would arise from the creation of conflicting sects and parties, each striving to obtain the mastery over the other, and all aiming to set up their own authority and their own laws above those asserted by Christ. The guilt of schism does not belong to an external separation from a church compelling that separation; but it *does* attach to every practice, the natural effect of which is to divide the hearts and affections of Christians from each other, and to weaken those ties of charity and love by which they are mutually bound together*. If, for instance, in the days of Paul, he who exclaimed "I am of Apollos" had induced the majority of the church to which he belonged to join in the same exclamation, and they had then united together in proclaiming the authority of

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* "Wheresoever false or suspected opinions are made a piece of church liturgy, he who separates is not schismatic, but he who imposes."—*John Hales of Eton, Tracts*, p. 182. "When a church requires unnecessary conditions of communion, then that church must take on itself the charge of schism."—*Bishop Stillingfleet, Irenicum*, p. 199. See also *Jeremy Taylor's Liberty of Prophesying*, sect. 22.

their leader as superior and paramount to that of all other Christian teachers; and, under the cover of this plea, had demanded of their fellow-Christians assent to doctrines and compliance with practices of which their consciences could not approve,—do you suppose that the Apostle Paul, for the sake of what is called the peace of the church, would have counselled the minority to submit quietly and patiently to the unrighteous usurpation of the majority,—thus to surrender up the freedom of their minds, and suffer the galling yoke of spiritual bondage to be laid upon them? No. He would have said, as upon another occasion he *did* say, "Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made you free." Assert, manfully and temperately, your Christian privilege of judging for yourselves what is right. Never forget the allegiance which you owe to Christ alone, by yielding implicit obedience to the commands of another. Resist all attempts at such spiritual dictation. Say to your deluded brethren that one is your master, even Christ, and that to no other master will you bend the knee of unquestioning submission. If this remonstrance avail not, and they should still persist in exacting obedience, where obedience is not due, withdraw from them in quietness and charity, and associate together as a Christian church upon principles more con-

genial with the enlarged and liberal spirit of your Christian faith. Whatever evil may arise from this separation is not caused by you. It is the work of those who have unwarrantably assumed the right of legislating in matters where the only lawgiver is Christ himself. They are the worst schismatics who sow the seeds of division, who, by their arrogance and presumption, compel others, valuing and loving the community of free and honest minds, to withdraw from their communion. It is they, who thus play the part of spiritual despotism, that justly incur the blame of schism, and not those who, to uphold the purity and integrity of their own minds, feel obliged to separate from them.

When, therefore, fault is found with us for departing from the communion of the Established Church, let it be shown that the separation is a needless one, that it is wantonly and causelessly made; not in obedience to the imperative commands of conscience, not from deference to that inward law of righteousness which should be the guiding principle of every man's conduct, but because we have formed ourselves into a party, and are governed by party motives, and have in view, not so much the promotion of Christian truth, and the furtherance of the ends of Christian benevolence, as the advancement of the inter-

ests of a faction, and the indulgence of sectarian partialities and antipathies;—let this be shown, and then the imputation of schism, of fomenting unholy and uncharitable divisions and dissensions in the church of Christ, will not unjustly be advanced against us. But I am greatly mistaken if it cannot be made evident, to the satisfaction of the most determined churchman that ever existed, that, whether we are right or wrong with respect to the grounds of our dissent, those grounds, so long as they appear to us to be founded in truth, furnish a sufficiently valid reason for our withdrawment from the Established Church. We ask with the Apostle Paul, when the members of this or that church exclaim, "I am of Apollos, and I of Cephas," or, which amounts to the same thing, I am of Calvin, and I of Luther, and I of the framers of the Thirty-nine Articles, "Are ye not carnal?" Are ye not betraying a spirit kindred to the narrow, exclusive, and selfish ways of the world? With such a spirit we should have no communion; it is essentially an evil spirit, and ought to be exorcized from every Christian mind. If, perchance, it should gain entrance into a Unitarian church—if there, too, should be heard the voice which says, I am of Socinus, and I of Priestley, and I of Lindsey, I trust that there are those among us sufficiently alive to the rights and du-

ties of a professedly Christian society to denounce and rebuke such a spirit, and, if need be, to withdraw from the communion which it pervades and governs. The only basis on which a true Christian church can be erected, is that which is large enough and broad enough to admit every sincere disciple of Christ, on the terms prescribed in the New Testament. Anything narrower than this, anything more restricted and confined, is at once a signal to every man, within whose breast burns the faintest spark of the love of truth and freedom, to keep aloof from it, and go in search of another, and, it may be, a humbler temple, but whose doors are wide open to receive every Christian who may wish to enter in, without first requiring him to "bow down in the house of Rimmon," and to burn incense to the idols of human vanity and presumption.

The grounds upon which we, as Unitarian Christians, withdraw from the communion of the Established Church are so important, that, allowing them to be just, all must concede, I think, that our secession is not needless, is not made in the spirit of factious opposition, is not of wantonness or caprice, but of necessity and constraint. Let the points in which we differ from the creeds and articles of that church be brought fairly before the sincere and ingenuous mind; let all conse-

quences be put away from its contemplation save those connected with the interests of truth and righteousness; let it give forth its judgement freely and independently, and impelled by no influences but those of its own inward convictions; and who can doubt that the decision of such a mind would be in favour of the nonconformity we practise? Of course it behoves us to know, and understand, and be satisfied with the principles on which we act. That being supposed, no other course is left open to us, if reason, and conscience, and honesty are to determine our path, but the one which we have chosen.

There is, however, one admission which, in justice, I cannot refuse to make, and that is, that as there are members of the Established Church who have no reason for belonging to it except that arising from habit, fashion, or interest, in like manner there are many Dissenters who are so or have become so, not because their judgements and consciences have had any share in the matter, but because they have been guided by the prejudices of education, by the accidental associations of life, or by personal and party predilections and antipathies. For all who dissent from the Church of England I am far from claiming the merit of high and independent principle; and there are many who appear to me to dissent on very slender and insufficient

grounds. This, however, is a question which must be left to every man's own mind to judge of and determine for himself. He has a right to connect himself with whatever Christian church he pleases, and in so doing we have no right to say more to him than this, See that you exercise this privilege honestly; let the motives from which you act be pure; take care that nothing mean or unworthy lurks at the bottom of your choice; be sure that it is made in the spirit of conscientious determination; and you have fulfilled all the reasonable conditions that can be demanded of you. There is, and there can be, no higher duty than that of obedience to the law of conscience; and there is no department of human thought and care where this law should reign with so peremptory and absolute a sway as in that of religion. This is a truth of which both Churchmen and Dissenters alike require to be reminded; for neither of them, it is to be feared, sufficiently make it the guiding light, the ruling authority of their minds and conduct.

My concern, however, at this time, is not with the principles of Dissenters, speaking generally, but of that class of them more particularly denominated Unitarian Christians. It is of *them* that I am about to speak; it is *their* cause that I have now to plead; it is *their* separation from the

Established Church that I have to vindicate; it is the sufficiency, the fullness, the commanding power and strength of *their* reasons for nonconformity that I have now to set before you.

In executing this task I shall take my stand upon common ground, passing by what may have been the favourite position of certain individuals, and confining myself to that in which all have an equal interest, and where all may contend with equal success. Questions of mere external regulation, concerning church government and the observance of forms and ceremonies, which in times past constituted, and with many in these days still constitute, the main points of disagreement and separation, would not, in my estimation, if all other occasions of offence were removed, present any insurmountable obstacles to union with the Church of England. I deny not that these questions are questions of importance, and well worthy to be considered and discussed. By all means let them be so; and let every individual urge them upon the attention of others according to his own sense of their merits and value. But, as they are, confessedly, matters of calculation and comparison, and not subjects upon which the Law has gone forth and pronounced its irrevocable fiat,—upon which conscience and duty have spoken with a clear and commanding voice,—they

should not, in my judgement, be set forth as of primary and paramount importance. To their occupying such a position I have strong objections, not only for the reasons just mentioned, but because there are many sincere and conscientious Unitarian Dissenters, whose faith and profession are not grounded upon such considerations; and therefore no one has a right to state *that* as a common principle of the body to which he belongs, which in truth is *not* a common principle.

Besides objections to certain forms and observances, of which I cannot say that I think them worthy of the weight and importance which have been attached to them, objections have also been made to the Church of England simply as an establishment, purely because it is endowed, and its temporal wants are provided for by the State. Many Dissenters are at this time particularly earnest in insisting upon this as the great grievance of all; as that, in comparison with which all other reasons for dissent sink into positive insignificance. With such persons I do not agree. I do not agree with them in their reasonings. I do not agree with them in their conclusions. The question of church establishments, or of a legal provision by the State for securing to the State an adequate supply and a regular succession of well-

educated men for the Christian ministry, is one so important, so complicated, involving topics of the gravest consideration, and connected with such a train of interesting and momentous results, that I should deem it great folly to attempt its discussion within the limits of the present discourse. I will only observe that the subject of a church establishment, generally considered, ought not to be confounded with that particular form or species of it existing in our own country. That may be bad; in its construction bad, in its administration bad. But this, as every one must perceive, is a totally different question from the consideration of a state provision, taken abstractedly and generally. Whether such a provision *could* be made, consistently with a full maintenance of the rights of conscience, placing all Christians upon the same footing, excluding none, stigmatizing none, degrading none, but embracing and comprehending all; whether an endowed church, formed upon this model, with such a breadth of basis, and such an amplitude of dimensions, and consisting of solid and durable materials, could be built up, may appear to some more than doubtful and problematical. To me, I own, it seems easy and practicable enough. Let there be the right spirit prevailing, and the right means will not be wanting. If such a church could be formed, I have

no hesitation in declaring that to such a church I should feel no objection in conforming. Nay, I will go further, and say, Repeal the Act of Uniformity; remove the burthen of tests and subscriptions; give to the laity and the clergy the enjoyment of Christian liberty; let there be free open communion to all, whether ministers or congregations, without the imposition of any other terms or conditions than those prescribed by Christ and his Apostles,—and there will remain nothing, on the score of conscience, to prevent me from entering within the pale of the present Establishment.

This observation brings me at once to the main purpose of the present discourse. It leads me to say, that it is because there is not this Christian liberty allowed to the members of the English Church; that because it manacles conscience, fetters the mind, chains down reason, imprisons the understanding, and limits within a given prescribed circle the range of religious inquiry and reflection; that because it usurps powers which it ought not to exercise, and assumes functions which it is neither fitted nor was designed to discharge; that because it enacts laws instead of obeying them, and prescribes, of its own will and pleasure, terms of Christian fellowship instead of conforming to those already laid down in

the New Testament*; in a word, that because it is not Scriptural in its worship, or in the demands which it makes upon the worshipper; we have no alternative but that of withdrawing from its communion, and protesting before the world against this perversion of Christ's ordinances, against this invasion of Christian freedom.

Here lie, as it seems to me, the strongholds of Unitarian Dissent. I call them strongholds, because they are not points of expediency and calculation, like those of church government, and church forms, and church establishments, all which may be good or bad according to their tendency, and, therefore, to be judged of by their tendency; but to the Unitarian, the objections to which I have just referred present themselves in the clear commanding form and attitude of positive and absolute principles. With him it can be no question whether the worship of the Church of England be right or wrong. Conscience declares, in language too plain to be mistaken, that for *him*

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* In the Fifth Canon of the English Church we read, "Whosoever shall hereafter affirm that any of the Nine and Thirty Articles agreed upon for avoiding diversities of opinion, and for the establishing of consent, touching true religion, are in any sort superstitious or erroneous, or such as he may not with a good conscience subscribe unto, let him be excommunicated ipso facto."

it is wrong. It does not leave him at liberty to inquire what its tendency is—what its consequences may be. Tendency and consequences are here out of place. On this ground we are not permitted to balance one consideration against another, to oppose objection to objection, and to weigh advantages and disadvantages in the scale of the prudential reason. That is not our province here. There are, indeed, as I have already stated, matters about which this exercise of the judgement may be most proper and fitting; but it is not proper and fitting to consider whether it becomes me to worship as gods those whom I do not consider to *be* gods. From the moment that I come to this conclusion, from the moment that I adopt Unitarian opinions, Trinitarian worship stands before me in the light of a thing forbidden. There is a law above that of expediency and calculation, and worldly prudence, which says, "Worship God alone, and to him only pay your religious homage." If you consider with yourselves whether that law may be violated, or how it may be indirectly evaded, you are considering what you have no right to consider. Whether there *be* such a law it is yours to consider; but when the existence of such a law is ascertained, the door of inquiry is shut. There is no longer any entrance for the suggestions and in-

terrogatories of propriety and utility. The only access *then* left open is for the spirit of submission and obedience.

Among the foremost of the reasons for Unitarian Dissent, I place that of THE WORSHIP OF ONE GOD, THE FATHER. This, we say, is Christian worship. This is the worship which Christ paid. This is the worship which the Apostles paid. This is the worship which, in express and positive language, we are commanded to pay. We are prepared to quote chapter and verse in the New Testament where this command is laid down with a clearness that precludes all doubt, and with a precision that defies all casuistry. Show us, we say, that this command is not given, or that we have mistaken its import, and one principal cause of our dissent will be removed. But unless this can be done, we stand upon a rock, and that rock is the word of God. In the Scriptures there are these plain and intelligible commands of the Saviour: "Worship God alone. The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. When ye pray, say, Our Father. In that day ye shall ask me nothing." In conformity with these precepts was his own constant practice, as well as the practice of the Apostles. He worshipped and prayed to the Father, and the Father only; and the Apostles, with one mouth,

glorified God, even the Father. There is no mention in Scripture of the worship of the Trinity. There is no record of prayers being addressed to "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." We therefore dissent from, and protest against, the use of such language in Christian worship. We protest against it as a departure from the plain and positive directions contained in the Christian's statute-book; as contrary to the injunctions and example of our Lord and his Apostles. Further than this we pretend not to go; or, if we do, we also are censurable for usurping a power and a prerogative to which we have no valid claim. As a Christian Church our business is to worship God in the spirit and after the manner that Christ has directed. In addressing our prayers to the Father only, we know that we are so far right, that we are truly and literally obeying our Lord's commands. Whoever, therefore,—be his opinions of the nature of the Deity what they may,—can unite with us in this worship is welcome to our communion. Our prayers are not to be made the vehicle of controverted doctrines, but of devout, grateful, and reverential sentiments of the Almighty Creator, of thanksgivings for mercies, supplications for pardon, and entreaties for moral and spiritual good. Consistently with these objects, the more comprehensive

our language is, and the freer it is from all allusion to the differences existing among Christians, the more conformable is it to the mind and spirit of Christ, the more catholic does our worship become, and the greater is its title to universal reception.

Next to purity of worship, the second great point on which we separate from the Established Church is in relation to the restraint which it lays upon conscience, the restriction which it places upon individual liberty of thought and judgement, and the imposition which it ordains of articles and creeds of mere human devising, and for which not the smallest Scriptural authority can be produced.

This subject opens a wide field of inquiry and discussion; too wide, indeed, to be gone over, even in the most cursory manner, in the brief space to which I am now limited. All that I can do is to select for observation one or two of the most prominent features in the view before us. I begin, then, with observing, that, admirable and beautiful as I admit the general strain of her liturgy to be, there is, notwithstanding, much in the service of the Church of England which is decidedly unscriptural, for which not the smallest warrant can be produced from Holy Writ, and which no Christian Church, professing to act on

the principles of the New Testament, ought to tolerate. I object strongly, as many before me have objected, to the invocation of God in supplicatory language of this kind: "By the mystery of thy holy incarnation, by thy holy nativity and circumcision, by thy baptism, fasting and temptation, by thy precious death and burial, by thy glorious resurrection and ascension." What, I ask, does this mean, and to whom is it addressed? If it be addressed to God—and to whom, but to God, can prayer *be* addressed?—then, I say, it is language of the use of which we can hardly speak in terms sufficiently condemnatory. Nothing more gross or shocking ever characterized the supplications of the most ignorant and barbarous people. It is worthy only of the darkest ages. To implore the Supreme Being by "his birth, his circumcision, his baptism, his fasting, his temptation, his agony," is so monstrous, that nothing but custom could, for a moment, reconcile any man to the adoption of such phraseology in reference to the Deity. It cannot be said, in excuse for it, that it is addressed to Christ as man—in his human capacity,—because as man he is confessedly not the object of prayer. It must, therefore, be addressed to him as God; and, so considered, the reason and the heart of every reflecting man revolt from it as

offensive to both, and derogatory to the nature and perfections of the Supreme Being.

To introduce such language into the forms of devotion; to retain it in spite of the remonstrances of some of the wisest and best of our race; to adhere to it, as though it constituted a necessary and essential part of divine worship, betrays an illiberal, uncatholic disposition in the Church which alone would justify a separation from it. Long ago did Bishop Stillingfleet refer, with the highest approbation, to these words of the ever-memorable John Hales: "Consider of all the liturgies that are, or ever have been, and remove from them whatever is scandalous to any party, and leave nothing but what all agree on; and the event shall be that the public service and honour of God shall no ways suffer." And more anciently still, the learned ecclesiastical historian Eusebius expressed himself to the same effect: "The use of unscriptural expressions," says he, "has been the cause of almost all the confusion and distractions that have happened in the churches*." There is much other objectionable phraseology with which the Book of Common Prayer is interspersed, on which

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* Euseb. Epist. ad Cæsaream, apud Socrat., lib. i., as quoted by Dr. Samuel Clarke.

I cannot now stay to dwell, and shall therefore pass on to observe that the language contained in some of the creeds which are to be read either statedly or occasionally, constitutes an offence against reason and propriety, against Christian liberty and Christian charity, of which the Church ought long since to have been ashamed.

Look at the Athanasian Creed, as it is erroneously called; was there ever a greater affront offered to the human understanding than is offered to it in the metaphysical, paradoxical, antithetical, anathematizing jargon with which that celebrated symbol of faith is not unsparingly garnished*? What right has any church, assuming to be a Christian church, to exact from its members the repetition of such a creed as this? Does it pretend to be of apostolic origin? Is it asserted by any of its advocates to be Scriptural in its language? Why, then, make it a part of that service which, as much as possible, should be accommodated to the views, feelings, and sentiments of all sincere believers in Jesus Christ. Let those who

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* To this so-called creed of St. Athanasius, is not the remark of Dr. Jortin on the creed of Cyril fairly applicable? "It consists of two parts; of curses and of doctrines: the curses are intelligible, and the doctrines are unintelligible. If it had been the reverse, it had been more for his credit."—*Disney's Life of Jortin*, p. 153.

think it a good exposition of what they consider to be the orthodox faith, make what use of it they please for their own instruction and edification out of the Church; but in a church professing to be founded on Christ's authority, and to be governed only by laws of *his* ordaining, it has no title whatever to be recited as an epitome of Christian doctrine. Still less is it entitled to such a character when we consider the damnatory clauses by which it is distinguished. I have no hesitation in saying, that the church which retains and requires, as a part of its service, the reading of so disgusting a formulary, signally disgraces itself by such an act. It is, indeed, most extraordinary that a creed of which nothing was known or heard till the sixth or seventh century, —a creed framed by some unknown person, in the darkest period of the Christian Church,—a creed which no one affects to understand,—a creed against the use of which, in the public services of the Church, some of the noblest and most gifted of her sons have earnestly and repeatedly remonstrated,—it is, I say, most extraordinary that a creed of so generally offensive a character, with no pretensions to apostolic authority and no claims to high antiquity, should, notwithstanding, be retained by the Church with the utmost pertinacity,—with a warmth and a zeal proportioned

to the degree of its absurdity, and the extent of its uncharitableness.

So, however, it will continue to be as long as those who are looked up to for their learning and respected for their virtues are content to slumber over or to wink at such incongruities and enormities, such departures from Christian simplicity, and such invasions of Christian liberty. It is this tame unresisting acquiescence in acknowledged abuses and detected corruptions, on the part of those whose voices of condemnation might be lifted up with mighty effect, which is the great obstacle to the desired reformation. When the excellent Archbishop Tillotson, speaking of the Athanasian Creed, expressed his aversion to it, by saying that "he wished the Church were well rid of it," he might have been reminded that there was one very effectual way of getting rid of it, and that was by such men as he quitting their stations in the Church, and openly testifying that they would belong to no communion which disgraced itself by the retention of so shameful and unauthorized a confession of faith as this.

Oh! that men of enlightened and generous minds would awake to a conviction of the advantages which they have it in their power to confer upon the cause of Christian truth and liberty! Courage, moral courage, is what we want,—the courage

that will face difficulty and danger, that will defy ridicule, that will endure neglect, that will encounter, without shrinking, the taunts of enemies and the reproaches of friends. Honesty, openness, plainness and sincerity,—this is the ministering service which truth and charity require. Let this service be rendered, and mightier and speedier than has yet been witnessed or anticipated will be their future progress and triumph in the world.

I now proceed to notice another instance of the unjust imposition, on the part of the Established Church, of unscriptural terms of communion, which adds to and strengthens the reasons already assigned for withdrawing from her ritual and worship. The instance to which I allude is that of subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, which, every one well knows, is made a necessary preliminary to the performance of the ministerial office in the English Church. Now let any one read over these articles, deliberately and carefully, and then let him say whether, in his conscience, he really thinks it reasonable, right, or fitting that any man, whose profession and duty it will be to preach the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, should be required to bend his understanding to such a yoke as this,—to lay upon his soul the fetters of so ignominious a bondage? I should be quite willing

to have the question decided by an appeal to the pure and genuine feelings, to the unperverted and unsophisticated judgement of an honest and unprejudiced mind. I do not believe that, except for party or interested purposes, or unless the passions, the worldly hopes and fears of men had been previously excited,—I do not believe that such a requirement would be viewed by any one, of common understanding and reflection, without feelings of unutterable aversion and disgust. I confess I hardly know how to speak of it in any measured terms of disapprobation. It is so unreasonable, so unauthorized, so unchristian, so affronting to the judgement, so revolting to the conscience, so opposed to all sense of justice and propriety, that every other emotion is lost and swallowed up in the one strong, burning, indignant sentiment of reprobation and scorn which it excites in my mind. The wonder with me is,—and it is a real, unfeigned wonder,—how any persons, in these days, dare insist upon such a proceeding, and how, when insisted upon, the spirit of every virtuous high-minded independent man does not rise up in rebellion against it, and push it from him with an instant and disdainful rejection. But the fact is, I fear, that too often the whole affair of subscription to articles of faith is considered as a mere matter of course, and as a

matter of course is yielded to without thought or care. But, that a subject of such importance should be *thus* treated, should be passed by *thus* lightly and heedlessly, should be engaged in with as much indifference as the performance of the veriest ceremonial, is the circumstance to be complained of,—is THE ONE THING to be decried and denounced. It is not, however, by all, nor always, regarded in this light. By many, subscription to articles of faith is seriously advocated and defended on the ground of utility and expediency. That such a measure may be made instrumental to the interests of a party or a sect, to the maintenance of *their* exclusive privileges and the continuance of their distinctive peculiarities, I can well understand. But I cannot understand how *that* can be promotive of the real and true interests of piety and virtue, which begins with an encroachment upon the territory of conscience, by blunting the moral sensibilities of the mind, and by cramping the exercise of its freedom and its energies.

But these articles, what are they? what are the pretensions which they lay claim to, and what is the ground of these pretensions?

These articles, it should be remembered, are a series of statements, embracing a great variety of subjects, some of them of a most difficult and intricate nature, and amounting, perhaps, alto-

gether to several hundred distinct propositions. And all these are submitted to a young man, previously to his assuming the ministerial office and character, to be by him assented to and believed, though, in all probability, he has scarcely bestowed upon them the most cursory examination; and with respect to many of them, if they had been ever so carefully considered by him, it is hardly possible that he can honestly say that he has made up his mind, or, at least, that he has so far made up his mind as to be able to declare that he truly and sincerely receives them. Now, what a strait is this for a well-disposed young man to be placed in! What a temptation to insincerity and prevarication; to palter with his conscience and equivocate with his tongue; to deal falsely and treacherously with his own thoughts; to mystify and confound, by various plausibilities and special pleadings, the clearest distinctions of right and wrong! And why should such a temptation be thrown in his way? Why should such lures and enticements be held up to draw him aside into the paths of duplicity and deceit? Is it fair, is it decent, to entrap the understanding into such a surrender of its rights and duties as this act of subscription to human interpretations of divinely revealed truth implies? Suppose,—and this supposition, observe, will form a very good

test of the soundness and propriety of the measure,—suppose that, *at this time*, a new set of articles were drawn up, containing two or three hundred distinct propositions on some of the abstrusest questions that can be submitted to the consideration of the human understanding, and that subscription to these articles, though strongly recommended, was, however, not enforced by pains and penalties,—suppose that it stood only on the ground of its own intrinsic reasonableness and religious acceptableness,—suppose, I say, a case like this, Does any one seriously think that there could be found a dozen well-instructed, well-informed men in the kingdom who would consent to the proposal? And why,—if we think it so difficult, so impossible even, for the wise and learned of the present day to compile a long list of articles on the most abstract and debateable questions in theology, with any chance of commanding the assent of Christians generally,—why should we suppose that they, who lived two or three hundred years ago, were better qualified for the task, or better entitled to implicit confidence and reliance?

Keep in mind, then, this plain simple question, which I will now repeat in another form.

How many a candidate for the office of the ministry in the Church of England would, volunta-

rily, of his own inclination and accord, subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles? If it were not made a necessary and essential condition of admission to what are termed "holy orders"; if it were not made a step or passport to future honours and favours, to certain prospective advantages and preferments; if it stood purely and entirely on the basis of its own spiritual recommendation, unmixed with any temporal considerations whatever; the question which I ask is this, How many, among those who are eagerly preparing for the ministry of the Church, would *then* declare, as they are all now compelled to declare, their unfeigned assent and consent to the hundreds of propositions contained in the Thirty-nine Articles? Let every thoughtful, sober, reflecting man put to himself this question, and I am perfectly willing to abide by the result of his honest and conscientious verdict.

You will perceive that I am dealing very directly and plainly with the subject: and pursuing the same course, I ask again, is it right, is it reasonable, is it on any account desirable, that a man, seeking the office of a Christian minister, should, in order to attain this object, be compelled to do that which, if left to himself, he would *not* do; should be constrained to the performance of an act which neither his judgement nor his conscience would allow him to perform,

if left to their own unbiassed, unforced, voluntary impulse?

Look at the tendencies and the probable consequences of such a proceeding. The candidate for the ministry either subscribes to what he has never, perhaps, seriously considered*,—which no one will contend is, in itself, either just, proper, or expedient,—or, which is still worse, if he *has* considered and examined the Articles, with a view of ascertaining their truth and agreement with Scripture, it is ten to one but doubts and misgivings, respecting some at least of the many propositions which they contain, will arise in his mind, and which, therefore, he must contrive to silence or varnish over, in some way or other, in order to fulfill the necessary required conditions. That is, his very first step into the sacred temple must be accompanied by acts of compromise and collusion, by mental reservations and verbal equivocations. Surely nothing can be worse than this. Nothing can be a worse preparative for that pure, open, honest, manly simplicity,—that sincere dealing with truth, and that artless, undisguised, dignified demeanour which become the office and

* More than a century ago Bishop Burnet complained that the greater part of the clergy, even then, subscribed the Articles without ever examining them, and that others did it because they must do it.—*Burnet's History of his Own Times*, Conclusion.

character of the Christian minister,—which alone can raise it above the clouds of suspicion, and place it in the heaven of the people's love and confidence. It is miserable to think of what the commencement of so important an undertaking must often be,—of the shifts and evasions to which the mind is invited and driven, at the very moment when every possible incentive should be supplied, and every animating encouragement should be held out to the most open, straightforward, ingenuous, unsophisticated declaration and exercise of its thoughts and feelings. Instead, however, of looking at the Articles and studying their real import and significance, one man endeavours to extract from them one meaning; another, another; and a third, a different meaning still. The utmost skill is exerted; the greatest ingenuity is employed; words and phrases are put to the torture, in order to make the Articles quadrate with the opinions of the subscriber, or to shape and mould the opinions of the subscriber into an apparent resemblance and congruity with the Articles. In this work, what subtlety and refinement and hair-splitting distinctions are made use of! Verily, the Protestants of some Churches and persuasions have taken good care that these arts should not be a monopoly of the Jesuits. Here, in this craft of word-catching, they seem to

have resolved at all events not to be outdone by them. Hence it is contended by many, that we have to consider not the absolute positive meaning of the Articles themselves, but merely what the compilers, at the time, intended by them; the particular purpose they were designed to accomplish; whom they were meant to embrace, and whom they were meant to exclude; and that, with this understanding of them, they are to be subscribed and agreed to. Others, again, look upon them as simply articles of peace*, as equivalent to a general declaration of conformity to the Established Church, and of a determination to abide by her rules and regulations. Now, if the Articles may thus mean anything, everything, or nothing,—may be construed in a Calvinistic sense, or in an Arminian sense, or in neither, why lay upon the soul the burthen of their subscription? Is it not lamentable to think of the effect of such an imposition upon a noble, candid, upright, ingenuous young mind? It is, perhaps, in the process of explaining away the real meaning of these Articles, of endeavouring to twist and turn them into a sense different from that which they plainly

* This was the view entertained of them by Archbishop Laud, Sheldon, and many others of that day. And Chillingworth also seems to have been at length persuaded by them to adopt it. Vid. *Biog. Brit.*, Kippis's edition, Art. CHILLINGWORTH.

and obviously bear, of trying to effect a reconciliation and union between notions essentially discordant and repellent of each other, that the tricks and artifices of theological casuistry are first commended to his notice and regard. It is in this way, it may be, that the first fine sense of honour is impaired; that the first delicate sensibility to truth is paralysed; that the first keen edge of a tender conscience is worn off; that the first warm, generous, kindling sentiments and sympathies in favour of what has been called "the plain majesty of honest dealing" are chilled and repressed. Oh! who can calculate the seeds of evil that are thus scattered abroad, the amount of corrupt and corrupting influence that is thus insinuated into the mind?

It is, I conceive, utterly impossible that subscription to humanly prescribed articles of faith can do any good; can instruct and elevate the mind, or ennoble the soul, or breathe into the spirit of man impulses and desires of a pure, disinterested, heaven-uplifting nature. Its whole tendency, on the contrary, must be to dwarf the understanding, to narrow its views, to limit the range of its thoughts and inquiries, to keep it lame and halting in the pursuit of truth, or to turn it aside into the paths of cold indifference, or the beaten road of expedient conformity and unresisting acquiescence. In a

word, the requirement of such an act is but the laying of traps to ensnare the conscience, the spreading of meshes to entangle the understanding; and no one, who is desirous of upholding conscience in its purity and integrity, of preserving it free and independent, unassoiled with the world's breath, and unencumbered with the world's shackles, will belong to a Church, whether established or not established, which places such pitfalls in the way of those who are preparing to minister in holy things. I cannot conceive of a more weighty and substantial reason for separating from any community assuming to be a Christian community, than the one upon which I have now been animadverting. My language is, To a measure so full of injustice, so presumptuous in its claims, so spirit-enthralling in its tendency, and so pregnant with consequences injurious to the great interests of truth and righteousness, I will never, directly or indirectly, tacitly or avowedly, be a consenting party. Let us,—I would say to every Church of which I wished to be a member,—let us endeavour to secure, as far as, by human means, can be secured, the advantages of a ministry whose sole object shall be the investigation and communication of Christian truth; the services of men before whose eyes the book of God shall stand open without the interposing veil of

human creeds and confessions, and to whom, therefore, no worldly temptations, no sinister interests shall be present to induce them to deal unfairly with the great and momentous topics upon which they will have to meditate and discourse. Of such a ministry, whose very office it is to give forth the law as revealed in the oracles of God, it may not be unreasonable to demand, as a preliminary condition, on entering upon the discharge of their duties, a declaration of faith and trust in those oracles. But more than this it is not ours to demand; more than this cometh of evil; and more than this would be inconsistent with that Christian freedom, independence, sincerity, and uprightness which should be guarded and defended as the most precious jewel of the soul, and any busy meddling with which, by human laws and enactments, can only tend to its disfigurement and defilement.

The one all-powerful and insurmountable objection to subscription to articles of faith of man's imposing is, then, their manifest tendency to beget hypocrisy and insincerity*, to make the mind

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* So thought and reasoned Dr. Paley, as may be seen from the following passage taken from his defence of the 'Considerations on the Propriety of requiring Subscription' to Articles of Faith. "The author," says he, "contends very properly, that it is one of the first duties a Christian owes to his Master, to keep

play truant with itself, to cause it to "handle the word of God deceitfully," and to lead it to look at things not in the pure, clear, bright light of simplicity and truth, but as they are clothed and coloured in the forms and hues thrown over them by the devices of human policy, and the arts of human ingenuity. Except for selfish, party, and temporary purposes, I can conceive of no effect resulting from subscription to creeds which is not bad,—radically and thoroughly bad,—degrading to the mind, enslaving to the conscience, and corrupting to the heart. It cannot be required but for one or the other of these two purposes,—either to prevent all freedom of thought and inquiry upon the subject of religion, or to direct that thought and inquiry into one particular channel, to keep it "cribbed, cabined, and

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his mind open and unbiassed in religious inquiries. Can a man be said to do this, who must bring himself to assent to opinions proposed by another, who enters into a profession where both his subsistence and success depend upon his continuance in a particular persuasion? In answer to this, we are informed that these articles are no rule of faith; [What! not to those who subscribe them?] that the Church deprives no man of his right of private judgement; [She cannot; she hangs, however, a dead weight upon it.] that it is a very unfair state of the case to call subscription a declaration of our full and final persuasion in matters of faith, [though if it be not a full persuasion, what is it? And ten to one it will be 'final' when such consequences attend a change.]" —*Paley's Works*, edited by his Son, vol. iii. p. 291.

confined," within a given prescribed circle. Now, the attempt to restrain and prevent those whose bounden duty it is to endeavour to understand and to preach the pure doctrines of Jesus Christ, from fairly and properly exercising their minds in the work in which they are engaged, would be in the highest degree sinful and criminal; and no greater condemnation of the Articles could be pronounced than the avowal that such was the design of their institution. There is only one other purpose for which they can have been ordained, and that is, that they might so operate to limit and fetter the course and range of religious inquiry, as to preclude any wide and material diversity of opinion. This is the real and professed object of their ordination. It is expressly stated, that for this end they were instituted and compiled*. Their aim and intention is to produce and preserve a uniformity of faith. What! a uniformity of faith—and upon such a great variety of topics as those embraced in the Tirty-nine Articles? Impossible! exclaims Reason. Impossible! echoes the voice of Experience. There never was a more monstrous piece of folly exhibited in the workshop of human vanity and presumption, than that of

* They are entitled "Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops ..... for the avoiding of Diversities of Opinions, and for the establishing of Consent, touching true Religion."

attempting to secure, by any art or contrivance, a uniformity of belief on all the great and momentous questions that occupy the ground of religion. After all the lessons which have been read to us from the history of the past, after what we ourselves have individually witnessed and observed, and after the various arguments that have been addressed to our understandings, still to be told of the practicability of securing a uniformity of religious belief by the enforcement of subscription to creeds and articles, can only excite the stare of surprise, or provoke the laughter of ridicule. When it is notorious that in those Churches where this burthen weighs most heavily, dissensions have sprung up, divisions have arisen, and controversies, violent and long-continued controversies, have been agitated; when it is considered that the sight of that terrible tribunal, the Inquisition, could not scare away diversity of opinion, and that the boasted unity of the Romish Church was torn asunder by internal conflicts and struggles; when it is remembered that in this country the established religion, though nominally the same to all, is in reality different to many,—that its doctrines, though professing to be entertained in one sense, are actually held in various senses,—it would, after this, be an insult to our reason any longer to have it said that the ob-

ject is answered, for which, mainly, subscription to Articles has been exacted. To use the language of Paley, "They may check inquiry, violate liberty, ensnare the consciences of the clergy, by holding out temptations to prevarication," but as to preventing diversity of opinion, their influence is vain and impotent. If, however, by any human means, it *were* practicable to attain this object, so much the worse; for it would then be a proof that, upon the subject of religion, the mind of man was reduced to a state of listlessness and indifference destructive of inward dignity, and fatal to all high, manly, and generous action. The peace that would then prevail would be the peace, and along with the peace, the coldness and stillness, of death. What Milton said of the doctrines of the Church and the scheme of prelacy, may, with at least equal propriety and effect, be applied to fixed formularies of faith of every description: "If to bring a numb and chill stupidity of soul, an unactive blindness of mind upon the people, be to keep away schism, they keep away schism indeed. With as good a plea might the dead palsy boast to a man, 'It is I that free you from stitches and pains, and the troublesome feeling of cold and heat.' The Winter might as well vaunt itself against the Spring, 'I destroy all noisome and rank weeds, I keep down all pestilent vapours;' yes, and all

wholesome herbs, and all fresh dews; but when the gentle west winds shall open the fruitful bosom of the earth, thus overgirded by your imprisonment, then the flowers put forth and spring, and then the sun shall scatter the mists, and the manuring hand of the tiller shall root up all that burdens the soil without thanks to your bondage*."

That of which we stand most in need is not the concord and harmony resulting from one unvaried round of dull monotonous thinking, but the union and charity which spring out of the cultivation and exercise of benevolent and Christian dispositions, from knowing and freely according to every man the rights which belong to him as an intellectual and moral being, and from recognising and owning no authority to which he is amenable but his conscience and his God. Let this foundation for the peace of the Church be laid deep and strong in the hearts of Christians, and more will be done to secure this desirable object than can be gained by the fabrication of the best-devised creed which the wisdom of the wise can put together. The imposition of articles may, indeed, subserve the interests of a party; it may answer

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* The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty, chap. vi.

a sectarian purpose, a worldly purpose, and may operate to produce some trifling and transient benefit: but it never *can* conduce to real, substantial, durable good; for it wars with nature and reason, with the free action of the mind and conscience, and with the claims, the privileges, and the duties of our Christian heritage and calling. And therefore our determination should be to withdraw from *any* and *every* Church, calling itself Christian, which bars all access to its communion except through such a door of unrighteous usurpation as that to which I have been referring. The barriers of human creeds and articles must be thrown down and swept away, or the sense of what is due to my own mind, to the minds of my fellow-Christians, to the commandments of God, and to the authority of Christ, directs, urges, compels me to stand aloof, and not participate in the injustice and oppression of which they are the instrument and the occasion.

Against this injustice and oppression many and strong have been the protests made, at different times, by some of the wisest and best men of whom our country can boast, as well in the Church as out of it. But, as I before observed of the Athanasian Creed, so I now say of the Thirty-nine Articles, that complaints upon complaints may be preferred against them, but they will not

be listened to. They will not be listened to, they will not be regarded, as long as they are merely complaints. Let those complaints go forth and embody themselves in decided, unequivocal overt acts of opposition and resistance; let the good men who feel the burthen and loathe it, shake it from them by quitting their hold of the Church that has laid it on, and there will be a speedier abatement of the nuisance, a readier redress of the grievance than *can* be hoped for by continued silence and uncomplaining adherence. The example of the great and glorious Milton is, in this respect, one which it would do honour to any man to follow. In assigning his reasons for endeavouring to effect a further reformation in the Church, he, in his own peculiar and forcible strain of eloquence, thus writes: "Were it the meanest underservice,—if God, by his secretary, conscience, enjoin it, it were sad for me, if I should draw back; for me especially, now when all men offer to help, ease, and lighten the difficult labours of the Church, to whose service, by the intentions of my parents and friends, I was destined of a child and in mine own resolutions; till, coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the Church, that he, who would take orders, must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he

took with a conscience that would retch, he must either straight perjure, or split his faith, I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence, before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing*."

Thus spake the immortal Milton, and other great and good men also have spoken of the same thing in terms scarcely less disparaging and derogatory, though seldom accompanied with the same noble and magnanimous practical demonstration of their opinion as that given by our illustrious bard†.

Of the strain of language adopted by some of the first divines and prelates of the Church of England itself, first in learning and first in character, on the subject of Church authority and subscription to articles of faith, I shall now subjoin a few specimens. "Let nothing," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "be taught as simply necessary to

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* Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty, book ii.

† Among those, however, who have afforded, in their conduct, ample proof of their hostility to this species of mental vassalage, honourable mention should be made of Whiston, who, when it was intimated to him by Sir Joseph Jekyl, that, if he were disposed to accept of preferment, he might probably be made a bishop, immediately answered, "I would not sign the Thirty-nine Articles to be made Archbishop of Canterbury."—*Whiston's Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 163.

be believed, but what is evidently and plainly set down in the Holy Scriptures. For he that calls a proposition necessary which the Apostles did not declare to be so, or which they did not teach to all Christians, learned and unlearned, is gone beyond his proportions. For everything is to be kept in that order, where God has placed it*." "Bodies of confessions and articles do much hurt, by becoming instruments of separating and dividing communions, and making uncertain and unnecessary propositions a certain means of schism and disunion. 'Lord, I believe thou art the Son of God who was to come into the world;' that was Martha's creed. 'Thou art the Christ the Son of God;' that was Peter's creed. 'We know and believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;' that was the creed of the Apostles. 'This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;' that was the creed which our Lord made....†"

"It has never gone well," says Archbishop Wake, "with the Church of Christ since men have been so narrow-minded as to mix the controversies of faith with their public forms of worship, and have

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* Second Visitation Sermon on Titus, ii. 7.

† *Ductor Dubitantium.*

made their liturgies, instead of being offices of devotion to God, become tests and censures of the opinions of their brethren*."

The language of Chillingworth is, "Let all men believe the Scripture, and that only, and endeavour to believe it in the true sense, and require no more of others; and they shall find this, not only a better, but the only means to suppress heresy, and restore unity. For he that believes the Scripture sincerely, and endeavours to believe it in the true sense, cannot possibly be a heretic. And if no more than this were required of any man, to make him capable of the Church's communion, then all men so qualified, though they were different in opinion, yet, notwithstanding any such difference, must be of necessity one in communion†."

In the same manner writes the learned Bishop Stillingfleet: "Without all controversy, the main inlet to all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the Christian world, hath been by adding other conditions of church-communion than Christ has done..... Forms of divine worship should be composed so as to be the least subject to any scruple from any person whatever; and were a

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* Sermons, vol. i. p. 195.

† Preface to 'Reply to the Author of Charity Maintained.'

review made by wise and peaceful men, not given to wrath or disputing, it might be so far from being a dishonour of the Church, that it may add to the glory of it*."

Much more to the same effect might be cited from these and other distinguished Divines of the English Church. The sentiments thus expressed are such as become enlightened and liberal men of all persuasions, and, if I am not grievously mistaken, they are in entire harmony and accordance with the opinions which we profess, and the principles on which our Churches are conducted.

If it be asked, then, What is Unitarian Christianity? my answer is, It is Christianity freed from the peculiarities of different sects. It is Christianity as professed by the universal Church. It is that which unites into one all the scattered members of Christ's mystical body. It is Christianity such as it was before it was transformed into creeds and confessions and articles and systems. And it is the faith which will survive and flourish, when the names and distinctions, into which Christians are now divided, shall be forgotten and lost in the one common name and the one great community which will, eventually, embrace and comprehend all.

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* Preface to 'Irenicum'; Preface to 'Uneasiness of Separation'.

But this faith, what is it? What are the principles of which it is composed? What are the doctrines alike pervading all Churches, and constituting the vital, essential parts of the Christian religion? I cannot better describe them than as they have been already described by two men of opposite communions; the one a Roman Catholic, the other a member and minister of the Protestant Church of England. According to the late Mr. Charles Butler, the fundamental principles of Christianity, those in which all Christians are agreed, may be included in the following summary.

"1. That there is one God; 2. That he is a being of infinite perfection; 3. That he directs all things by his providence; 4. That it is our duty to love him with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves; 5. That it is our duty to repent of the sins we commit; 6. That God pardons the truly penitent; 7. That there is a future state of rewards and punishments, when all mankind shall be judged according to their works; 8. That God sent his Son into the world to be its Saviour, the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him; 9. That he is the true Messiah; 10. That he taught, worked miracles, suffered, died, and rose again, as is related in the four Gospels; 11. That he will hereafter make a second appearance on the earth, raise all mankind from the dead, judge the world

in righteousness, bestow eternal life on the virtuous, and punish the workers of iniquity*."

Here is a list of what an enlightened Roman Catholic considered to be the great fundamental principles of the Gospel,—those principles which are acknowledged by Christians generally; and *to not one of these* does the Unitarian offer the slightest objection. On the contrary, he could scarcely desire a better epitome than is here exhibited of the system of faith as professed by him. The other writer to whom I alluded is Dr. Arnold, a clergyman of the Established Church, and the head master of Rugby School. In a tract lately published by him, after stating that the problem is, how to unite persons of different opinions in one Church, he says, "Before such a union is considered impracticable or injurious to the cause of Christianity, might we not remember what, and how many those points are, on which all Christians are agreed?

"We all believe in one God, a spiritual and all-perfect Being, who made us and all things; who governs all things by his providence; who loves goodness, and abhors wickedness.

"We all believe that Jesus Christ, his Son, came into the world for our salvation; that he

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* Butler's Confessions of Faith, p. 199.

died, and rose again from the dead, to prove that his true servants shall not die eternally, but shall rise as he is risen, and enjoy an eternal life with him and with his Father.

"We all believe that the volume of the Old and New Testaments contains the revelation of God's will to man; that no other revelation than what is there recorded has been ever given to mankind before or since; that it is a standard of faith and a rule of practice; so that we all acknowledge its authority, although we may often understand its meaning differently.

"We all have, with very few exceptions, the same notions of right and wrong; or, at any rate, the differences on these points do not exist between Christians of different sects, but between sincere Christians of all sects, and those who are little better than mere Christians in name. We all hold that natural faults are not therefore excusable, but are earnestly to be struggled against; that pride and sensuality are amongst the worst sins; that self-denial, humility, devotion, and charity are amongst the highest virtues. We all believe that our first great duty is to love God; our second, to love our neighbour*."

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* Principles of Church Reform, by Thomas Arnold, D.D. pp. 29, 30.

Now this is neither more nor less than a statement of Unitarian Christianity. It exhibits a fair view of the principles that Unitarian Christians deem to be of the first and highest importance. So far from allowing that their opinions can be best expressed negatively,—by saying that they consist in not believing this or that particular doctrine, they would be happy if their attention were never more called to the points which they reject, to the doctrines which they deny; wishing much rather that their minds should be turned to the contemplation of the great positive principles above laid down, and which constitute the common faith of Christendom. They would rejoice to have the name *Unitarian* sunk and extinguished in the better name of *Christian*,—to feel that there was no longer any occasion for a peculiar title to designate them by, or to remind them by its etymology of the errors against which they now feel it to be their duty to protest. Their desire is to think of God as the one Almighty Creator and Father of men, without a question being raised as to distinctions or divisions in his nature. They would wish to contemplate the great and glorious character of the Saviour without being drawn aside to the consideration of different views regarding his personal existence. They would be glad to dwell on the rich promises, the bright and

beautiful hopes of the Gospel, without any reference to the doubts and difficulties that have been started respecting the mode and extent of Christian redemption. But while Christians, generally, *will* trouble and perplex themselves and others with subtleties of their own devising, with speculations about the divine essence which darken, if they do not wholly destroy, the beautiful and sublime simplicity of the doctrine of one universal Sovereign, the Creator and Father of all,—while, instead of regarding the Christian redemption as a redemption from ignorance and sin and death, as a redemption from a state of misery hereafter by raising us, through the ministry of Christ, to a state of purity, virtue, and holiness now,—while, instead of thus considering it, it is represented as a deliverance from the wrath and consequent punishment of an angry and vindictive Deity; and while, to engage in what we think a purer worship, and to enjoy the advantage of meditating upon nobler and better principles, we are obliged to separate from other Churches, and form ourselves into a distinct community,—unwillingly and reluctantly, it may be, but necessarily and for conscience sake,—while this is the case, we seem compelled to employ some appropriate appellation by which to mark and distinguish ourselves. And though we are desirous of taking the name that

will be most characteristic and descriptive of our faith, we are equally desirous that it should be one, which is, at the same time, unassuming and inoffensive. We do not, therefore, call ourselves "rational or liberal Christians," as some have proposed to do, and as, I believe, is sometimes done by our American brethren. This we think savours a little of presumption and arrogance; but we take rather the name of "Unitarian Christians," meaning thereby simply this, that we are of that class of Christians who worship one God, as one being or person, in contradistinction to those who worship three persons or beings, whom they denominate the Trinity. We wish not to impose upon one another the profession of any unauthorized creed, or to demand assent to any prescribed set of articles. We meet together as Christians, differing probably in many respects, but agreeing in this, the worship of one God, the Father, as disciples of one Lord Jesus Christ.

Our communion, therefore, is open to all Christians. We draw no line of exclusion,—we lay down no terms of admission. To every one who can unite with us in the worship of one God as a disciple of Jesus Christ, we hold out the right hand of fellowship, and welcome him as a friend and a brother. In denominating our Church a Unitarian Church, we would impose upon none of

its members any kind of bondage; we would not restrain the exercise of the most perfect freedom of opinion; we would not fasten upon the conscience the fetter of a single unauthorized dogma. Assembling together as Christians, for the purpose of divine worship and religious instruction, there must, of course, be a general agreement as to the object of worship, and the authority of him from whose law our instructions are to be drawn. Beyond this nothing more is necessary, and nothing more, therefore, should be required. It would be lamentable to suppose that our Churches were made up of those who entertained only one set of opinions, in as much as it would be a proof of the utter failure of our scheme, which is that of the establishment of a truly catholic Church. Be it remembered, then, that we do not unite, that we do not associate together as Christian worshippers on the ground of an entire agreement in religious opinion. The basis of our union is simply that of agreement as to the object of worship, the divine commission and authority of our spiritual lawgiver, and the right of every individual, without incurring the censure of his brethren, to interpret for himself the records of revelation, and to form, hold, and profess whatever opinions that interpretation may lead him to adopt. We meet together for the worship of one God, the Father, in

the name and as the disciples of Jesus Christ. Uniting together in this act, according in the justness, the propriety, and the scripturalness of this form of worship, we are not bound together by any other articles or terms of union. To the preservation of this concord and fellowship, we see no cause for sacrificing the individual independence and freedom of our own minds. While, therefore, we unite in the belief and acknowledgement of one only God as the object of our supreme adoration, and receive the instructions of Jesus Christ as the authorized messenger and revealer of his will, we not only do not exact anything like a uniformity of faith on other topics, but we expect, and are prepared, to find, among ourselves, a considerable diversity of opinion on many subjects of great interest and importance. In becoming members of a Christian Church we do not discard our individuality as men. It would, however, be a proof that that individuality *was* discarded, that the freedom of our minds *was* destroyed, that all sincere and honest exercise of our judgements *was* extinguished, if, from the moment that we joined ourselves to a society of professing Christians, all personal differences of opinion were then to cease. The prevalence of a uniformity like this would at once be an evidence of such a surrender of the rights of private judgement, of such an abandon-

ment of the privilege and the duty of thinking for ourselves, as would argue either a total forgetfulness of what belongs to us as men, or a deplorable indifference to the interests of truth and righteousness. So far from being displeased at the discovery of differences, and even of important differences of opinion among those associating together in the same Church, I welcome such an event as bearing strong and explicit testimony to the true sound catholic principles on which such a Church is established.

To uphold and maintain these principles our forms of worship should, as much as possible, be *general*, adapted to the varying circumstances and condition of the worshippers. The supplications, the thanksgivings, the confessions, the intercessions, should be such as all may be ready to join in, —such as all may be able to offer without hesitation or scruple. There should be nothing in them which can justly give offence to the devout Christian of any persuasion. " Let the Church," says Paley, " discharge from her liturgy controversies unconnected with devotion; let her try what may be done for all sides, by worshipping God in that generality of expression in which He has left some points; let her recall the terrors she suspended over freedom of inquiry; let the toleration she allows to Dissenters be made 'absolute'; let her invite men to search the Scriptures; let her gover-

nors encourage the studious and learned of all persuasions; let her do this, and she will be secure of the thanks of her own clergy, and, what is more, of their sincerity*."

The only Christian Church to which I could heartily attach myself must be founded on the principles here so well expressed by Dr. Paley. Its mode of worship and its terms of communion must be in conformity with the precepts and directions contained in the New Testament. Arrangements respecting the preservation of order and decorum, and matters of a kindred description, fairly come within the province of the Churches to settle for themselves; but the nature and object of Christian worship, and the terms or conditions of Christian communion, are not left to *our* determination, but are positively prescribed for us in the ordinances and statutes of Christ and his Apostles. To them we are restricted; by them we are to be guided. Now it appears to me, that, in these respects, our Churches, as far as I am acquainted with them, conform to the rules laid down for us. We are commanded, when we pray, to say, "Our Father"; to "worship God alone".† Accordingly, this is our practice. We

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* Paley's Works, edited by his Son, vol. iii. pp. 309, 310.

† "In the first and best ages," says Bishop Bull, "the Churches of Christ directed all their prayers, according to the

invariably do so. We are exhorted to "call no man Master on earth" but Jesus Christ. We obey this injunction; we bow to no authority but his. We are commanded to receive and regard every one as a Christian brother who confesses that "Jesus is the Christ," and who "believes in his heart that God hath raised him from the dead." To all who can make this confession we willingly open the doors of our communion. We build upon no little narrow foundation. The ground on which stands the edifice of our religious union is wide and comprehensive, designed to include all who are content with Scriptural forms of worship and with Scriptural terms of fellowship. Even a Trinitarian will find nothing in our devotional services to offend him, nothing with which he cannot cordially concur. Our prayers may not be all that he thinks they ought to be,—there may be *omissions* which he might wish to have supplied; but, as far as they go, his thoughts and feelings may readily go with them.

Scriptures, to God only, through the alone mediation of Jesus Christ."

"The Lord's Prayer," observes Archbishop Wake, "teaches us that we should pray to God only, and to Him as our Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."—See Dr. Clarke's Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, pp. 435, 436.

They contain nothing abhorrent to the one,—nothing revolting to the other. While they are addressed to one God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, they express no opinions adverse to those which any other Christian may entertain of the Divine nature. In our *prayers* he will find no terms or expressions directly condemnatory of any peculiar theological views which he may have been led to form,—nothing that can annoy, nothing that can disturb or disquiet his devotional feelings*.

And so, upon the subject of church communion, we ask not whether a man be a Trinitarian or a Unitarian,—we inquire not what may be his notions of the nature or person of Christ,—what he thinks of the doctrines of Calvin, of Arminius, or of Socinus. Our only requirement is that he be a Christian; one who acknowledges Christ as his Master, by whose instructions he feels it his duty to be guided. These, we contend, are the only

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* Many great and good men belonging to the English Church have advocated this principle. Amongst others Dr. William Claget is honourably mentioned by Dr. Samuel Clarke. "If, says he, in all established churches, the forms of divine service were so framed as in no wise to intrench upon any divine rule, all Christian people would, for the rest, leave considerations of prudence and expedience to those in authority, and comply with public order."—*Claget's Discourse of Church Unity.*

necessary preliminaries to the fellowship of a Christian Church, to the full participation and enjoyment of its privileges and advantages. Those who require more than this are exceeding the bounds of their rightful authority. And it is because of such usurpation and encroachment on Christian truth and liberty, that we feel compelled to withdraw from the Established Church and others calling themselves orthodox. I will add, that, if any trespass of this kind should be committed by a Unitarian Church,—if there, too, any human authority should presume to exalt itself above that of Scripture,—I should feel it to be no less my duty to withdraw from that Church than I now do to withdraw from those of a different denomination. What! it may be asked, has not every society a right to form its own laws and regulations, to lay down what terms of admission to its fellowship it pleases? Undoubtedly it has, if it be purely a voluntary association, originating in and entirely founded upon mere human authority. Then, indeed, its members might say to any applicant, We cannot receive you into our communion unless you will subscribe to our creed,—unless you will consent to walk with us in the same course of reflection and opinion that we walk in. But while Christ alone is the Master of Christians, while we profess to administer *his* or-

dinances and to be governed only by *his* laws, we have no right to reject any one from his Church, on account of some difference of sentiment on theological questions, or because he objects to the use of certain phraseology which he alleges to be unscriptural. We have no right to exclude any one from Christian fellowship, for which exclusion we cannot produce the clear and undoubted authority of Christ or his Apostles. Whatever Church, calling itself a Christian Church, arrogates to itself this power, is guilty of gross spiritual tyranny, and is violating, equally, the conscience of man, and the commandments of God.

"Require of Christians," says the celebrated Chillingworth, "only to believe Christ, and to call no man master, but him only: let those leave claiming infallibility, that have no title to it; and let them that in their words disclaim it, disclaim it likewise in their actions—in a word, take away tyranny, which is the devil's instrument to support errors and superstitions and impieties in the several parts of the world, which could not otherwise long withstand the power of the truth: I say, take away tyranny, and restore Christians to their just and full liberty of captivating their understanding to Scripture only: and as rivers, when they have a free passage, run all to the ocean, so

it may well be hoped, by God's blessing, that universal liberty, thus moderated, may quickly reduce Christendom to truth and unity*."

These golden words exhibit the ground on which we chiefly rest the vindication of our non-conformity to the Established Church. It is because the worship of that Church is not in accordance with the worship prescribed in the New Testament, and because other and different terms of communion are there set up than those ordained by Christ and his Apostles, that we feel obliged to withdraw from its service, as well as from that of all other churches acting upon similar principles. Whatever may be the errors and defects belonging to the constitution of our own churches, —and, probably, there are many,—they are not wanting, I am prepared to maintain, in the first and most essential requisites, scriptural worship and scriptural communion. These advantages we certainly possess. Free access is open to all. No restraints are laid upon any man's freedom of judgement. No human authority dictates to us what we are to believe. The rights of conscience suffer from us no attack, no invasion. We worship one God, the Father, in the name of our Lord

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* Quoted by Dr. Clarke, Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, Introd., pp. 16, 17.

Jesus Christ, and every man's faith "is to himself in the sight of God." We ask no questions. We say, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." "Happy is he who condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth." This, I believe, is in harmony with the practice of our churches. It is their distinctive peculiarity. Ever may it be so! for herein lies their noblest commendation; their glory, their honour, their justification, their defence.

THE END.

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